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Fashion and fallen women: the apparel industry, the retail trade, fashion, and prostitution in late 19th century St Louis

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Fashion and fallen women: The apparel industry, the retail trade, fashion, and prostitution in late 19th century St. Louis

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ABSTRACT

This study was an attempt to determine whether fashion, the clothing industry, or the retail trade played a role in bringing women into the profession of prostitution in St. Louis. This study also examined the common beliefs of the period including the conviction that young women fell from grace if they had an excessive love of dress. The people of the Gilded Age were concerned about whether their young women behaved and appeared appropriate while maintaining their virtue, despite the temptations of fashionable society. Fashion was of primary importance in the lives of most nineteenth-century people. However, young women who needed to work had an even more difficult time maintaining their virtue, since they received such low wages and still had to pay for the basic necessities of life; food, shelter, and, of course, clothing. Women who worked in the fashion industry sometimes had to turn to prostitution in order to supplement their meager incomes.

I used St. Louis as a case study of a large, well-established Midwestern city that had a thriving apparel industry in the nineteenth century. St. Louis also was interesting because the City Council essentially legalized prostitution with the Social Evil Ordinance. I also examined the impact of the Social Evil Ordinance on the prostitutes' lives and what it revealed about why the women became prostitutes. The Ordinance lasted from 1870 to 1874 when the state nullified it, ruling that it violated state laws against prostitution. Prostitutes were a unique group of women to study because few researchers have examined how fashion influenced the women's choices and the potential impact, positive or negative, that fashion or the apparel industry had on their lives. Furthermore, the prostitutes' appearances affected the amount of money they earned; therefore they needed to dress well. Additionally, women in

the clothing industries or the retail trades were susceptible to prostitution because they were so poorly paid while simultaneously being exposed to the finest apparel items that they often desired or needed. The combination of poverty and temptation led many women into prostitution.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Fashion makes fools of some, sinners of others, and slaves of all.

----- Josh Billings (1818-1885)[1]

JUSTIFICATION

Fashion was and continues to be of prime importance in the lives of most people in the United States and, as Billings stated, it has made fools, slaves, and, of importance for this study, sinners of many women. In the nineteenth-century, this was especially true because fashions were changing more rapidly than ever before. Furthermore, the United States was becoming industrial, allowing for the rapid change of styles and the increased dissemination of fashion information. People of the nineteenth-century truly believed that young women would do some foolish and even sinful things in order to be fashionable. The sin that alarmed most people was prostitution, and that is the focus of this study. Clothing has always been a major part in people's lives because it, along with food and shelter, make up the three main items necessary to live and thrive. However, in the nineteenth century, the excessive desire for fashionable clothing caused apprehension for many people. Fashion was important because it was the prime method by which people displayed their social rank. Clothing styles also showed a person's wealth because the prevailing idea was only the wealthiest could afford the most fashionable, expensive apparel. The fear of the Victorians

[1] Tobi Tobias, Obsessed by Dress (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 81. Josh Billings was the pen name of Henry Wheeler Shaw who was the son of Massachusetts State Senator Henry Shaw. He was a well-known and popular humorist of his day.

was that a young woman who was not wealthy, but wanted to appear so, would commit any sin including theft or prostitution in order to look fashionable.[2]

The actual clothing of nineteenth-century women has been studied extensively, but the combination of fashion and working in the apparel manufacturing or retail trades have not been thoroughly researched. This is an analysis of the impact that fashion and the St. Louis apparel industry had on poor women, and whether those things contributed to the reasons why women became prostitutes. An analysis of the St. Louis Social Evil Ordinance and the impact it had on prostitutes' lives was integral to this study. By examining these things, I evaluated the impact of fashion, the fashion industry, and the retail trade on the poor women and prostitutes of late nineteenth century St. Louis.

The people of the nineteenth-century were quite concerned with the reputations of young women. They were also anxious that young women behave and appear appropriate while maintaining their virtue, despite the temptations of fashionable society. There was a common belief that any woman could fall from grace if she were not well protected by her family.[3] Another belief of the period was that women became prostitutes "to satisfy a love of dress and display."[4] This belief held that women's desire for fashion without the taste of gentility would corrupt women and result in their moral downfall.[5] The accuracy of these beliefs will be examined.

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[2] Penelope Byrde, Nineteenth Century Fashion (London: B. T. Batsford, 1992), 110-114.
[3] Mason Long, Save the Girls (Fort Wayne, IN: Mason Long, 1885) and Dr. Dio Lewis, Chastity: Or Our Secret Sins (New York: Clarke Brothers, 1874).
[4] Long, 38.
[5] Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 29-30; Hilary Evans, The Oldest Profession: An Illustrated History of Prostitution (London: David & Charles Publishers, Ltd., 1979); Gerilyn G. Tandberg, "Sinning for Silk: Dress for Success Fashions of the New Orleans Storyville Prostitute." Women's Studies International Forum, 13 (1990): 229-248; and Marianna Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse." Victorian Studies, 32 (1989): 168-188.

The reason for choosing prostitutes was that they have rarely been seriously studied with regard to how fashion influenced their choices and the potential impact, positive or negative, that fashion and the apparel industry had on their lives. Furthermore, women in clothing industries or the retail trade were susceptible to prostitution because they were so poorly paid while simultaneously exposed to the finest apparel items.[6]

St. Louis was used as a case study of a large, well-established Midwestern city with a thriving apparel industry. The first objective was to determine what was happening in the apparel industry in late nineteenth-century St. Louis. In the decades following the Civil War, St. Louis was a prominent clothing-manufacturing city, and by 1880 it ranked sixth nationally in the value of its manufactured goods. Large numbers of men and women were required to produce the goods being manufactured and women were the primary workers in most areas of clothing production. Their jobs generally did not pay well, leaving many women destitute and desperate for an alternative way to earn additional money.[7] The combination of desperation and poverty quite often led many women into prostitution, in the opinion of contemporary observers.[8] St. Louis had a growing manufacturing district with a substantial apparel industry. As a result, the city had a population of working women who were subsisting on meager wages.[9]

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[6] Susan Porter Benson, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 135-136; Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 65-66; Ruth Rosen, The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 106-107.

[7] Katharine T. Corbett, In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1999), 101-104.

[8] Long, 133-174.

[9] James Neal Primm, Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980, 3rd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), 327-331.

Like many other growing cities, St. Louis also had a burgeoning red light district and a resultant problem with venereal diseases. By 1870, the red light district and the increased number of venereal disease cases were such problems that the city council essentially legalized prostitution with the passage of the Social Evil Ordinance (Appendix). The Social Evil Ordinance lasted from 1870 to 1874. It was an attempt by the city to control the spread of venereal disease among its citizens with the registration and regular medical inspections of the city's prostitutes. The Ordinance essentially legalized prostitution and, therefore, was a black mark on the city and state. In 1874, the state nullified the Ordinance, asserting that it contradicted the state laws against prostitution. Consequently, the City rescinded the Ordinance.[10] As a result, St. Louis is an area worthy of investigation in terms of the history of prostitution and clothing.

The impact of fashion on prostitutes has rarely been investigated, but the better-paid prostitutes and madams generally had enough money to spend on clothing. Their appearance was clearly a prop for their jobs. Typically, the research done with regard to prostitutes focused on general studies of the profession in large cities such as New York, San Francisco or Denver. Other studies have investigated legal matters of prostitution and city development.[11] The subject of prostitution has also been written about in non-scholarly

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[10] Corbett, 124-126.

[11] Jacqueline Baker Barnhart, The Fair but Frail: Prostitution in San Francisco, 1849-1900 (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1986); Curt Gentry, The Madams of San Francisco: An Irreverent History of the City by the Golden Gate (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964); Timothy J. Gilfoyle, City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920 (New York: W. W. North & Co., 1992); Al Rose, Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974); Clark Secrest, Hell's Belles: Denver's Brides of the Multitudes (Aurora, CO: Hindsight Historical Publications, 1996); and Jennifer Schulle, "The Madams of Denver's Market Street: Their Clothing and Their Lives" (M. A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1996).

tourist books.[12] Only three known studies have investigated the role clothing played in the lives of the prostitutes, but none of these were focused on the Midwest or St. Louis. Furthermore, these studies did not probe the impact that the apparel industry and fashion had on whether women entered the profession nor did they examine the veracity of the Victorian belief that women frequently sold themselves for fashionable apparel.[13]

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine whether fashion, the clothing industry, or the retail trade played a role in bringing women into the profession of prostitution. I then compared the research with the common beliefs of the period. I also examined the impact of the St. Louis Social Evil Ordinance on the prostitutes and what it revealed about the reasons why women became prostitutes. I then attempted to examine what the prostitutes were actually wearing and the relative importance of fashionable clothing in the lives of both prostitutes and genteel women. The study was limited to the madams and better-paid prostitutes since there was a specific hierarchy among the women. The lowest paid women, or the crib girls, often did not wear much more than their underwear because they made money based on the number of customers they serviced. In contrast, the better-paid prostitutes and madams had significant disposable income and were better able to purchase

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[12] Caroline Bancroft, Six Racy Madams of Colorado (Boulder, CO: Johnson Publishing Co., 1965); Kay Reynolds Blair, Ladies of the Lamplight (Colorado Springs, CO: Little London Press, 1971); Bruce Carlson, Some Awfully Tame But Kinda Funny Stories About Early Iowa Ladies of the Evening (Deep River, IA: Quixote Press, 1989).

[13] Jamie H. Pack, "The Fashions of a Madam: A Material Culture Analysis of Garments from the Belle Brezig Collection." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1992); Tandberg, 229-248; and Valverde, 168-188.

fashionable clothing. Furthermore, the women's appearances affected the amount of money they earned; therefore they needed to dress well.[14]

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following is the list of my original research questions, however as my research progressed it became necessary to modify and combine them.

1. How did the better-paid prostitutes and madams actually dress and were they considered fashionable?
2. Did apparel, the apparel and textile industry, or the desire for fashionable clothing play a part in bringing the women into prostitution? What reasons did women give for becoming prostitutes?
3. What impact, if any, did the prostitutes or genteel women in St. Louis have on each other's fashions?
4. Was any attempt made by the people of St. Louis or the prostitutes themselves to visually distinguish them as a group, and if so, what was done?
5. Was there any type of clothing or accessory item particular to the madams or prostitutes of St. Louis?
6. Did any type of clothing hold specific meaning for the prostitutes or the genteel women in order to visually define and distinguish either group? If so, what was the meaning of the item(s) and how was the clothing used to identify the group?

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[14] Schulle, 27-34. The town fathers of nineteenth century Denver attempted to distinguish the prostitutes from the genteel women by requiring that all prostitutes wear a yellow ribbon around their arms, but the women protested by dressing in solid yellow outfits and parading around town during the day until the order was rescinded.

Following are the modified questions that are asked and answered in this paper. Several of the questions were placed together because they covered similar topics, and the subsequent discussion of the answers naturally flowed together. The original questions were not eliminated, just grouped so that the general topics and subsequent answers could more easily be discussed.

1. How did the better-paid prostitutes and madams actually dress and were they considered fashionable? If the prostitutes were fashionable, was any attempt made by the people of St. Louis or the prostitutes themselves to visually distinguish them as a group? Was there any type of clothing or accessory particular to the madams or prostitutes of St. Louis?
2. What reasons did women give for becoming prostitutes? Did apparel, the apparel and textile industry, or the desire for fashionable clothing play a part in bringing the women into prostitution?
3. What impact, if any, did the prostitutes and genteel women have on each other's fashions? Did any type of clothing hold specific meaning for the prostitutes or the genteel women in order to visually define either group? If so, what was the meaning and how was the clothing used to identify the group?

DEFINITIONS

Following is a list of useful definitions for this research project.

Appearance: an individual's complete look including clothing, jewelry, makeup and accessories.[15]

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[15] Susan Kaiser, The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1990), 67.

Brothel: a house in which prostitutes lived and conducted their business.[16] In the nineteenth-century, a brothel was defined as "A house of lewdness; a house appropriated to the purposes of prostitution; a bawdy-house; a stew."[17] Brothels also may have been known as houses of assignation or boarding houses; however not all boarding houses were brothels.

Crib girl: A prostitute in the lowest level of the prostitute hierarchy. Crib girls usually operated out of a small building or room and made money due to the large number of customers they serviced each night.[18]

Crib: The place in which the crib girls live and/or work.[19] "A house, shop, warehouse, or public house." This definition is according to the slang of the period.[20]

Dry goods store: A store that sells "textile fabrics, and related or analogous articles of trade (as cloth, shawls, blankets, ribbons, thread, yarn, hosiery, etc.), in distinction from groceries."[21]

Fancy goods: Items for sale in stores that include "fabrics of varied or variegated patterns, as ribbons, silks, satins, etc., differing from those which are of a plain or simple style or color." Also included are "articles of show and ornament, not including valuable jewelry, but including appliances of dress less useful than ordinary textile materials or garments made of them, as women's collards, ruffles, ties, and the like."[22]

Fashionable: an individual dressed in the prevailing style of the period.[23]

Genteel: an individual who was "polite; well-bred; decorous in manners or behavior" and was "free from vulgarity or meanness in appearance, quality, amount, etc.; elegant; becoming." A genteel person was also someone who was "fashionable; stylish; à la mode."[24]

House of Assignation: A house or other building where a prostitute or streetwalker and her clients met and conducted their business.[25] The house of assignation also was known as a brothel, although house of assignation was the more commonly used term in St. Louis.

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[16] Anne Seagraves, Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West (Hayden, ID: Wesanne Publications, 1996), 167.
[17] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. I (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 695.
[18] Schulle, 13.
[19] Schulle, 12-13, 41.
[20] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. II (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 1348.
[21] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. III (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 1785.
[22] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. III (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 2136.
[23] Mary Brooks Picken, A Dictionary of Costume and Fashion; Historic and Modern (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985), 126.
[24] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. III (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 2488.

Madam: the owner and/or manager of a brothel.[26]

Magdalen(e): "A reformed prostitute."[27]

Prostitute: "A woman given to indiscriminate lewdness for gain; a strumpet; a harlot."[28] The previous was a literal definition from the nineteenth-century, whereas another, more satirical definition from the period follows: "A necessary evil. A protection for our daughters and sisters, as long as we have bachelors. Are always poor girls seduced by wealthy bourgeois."[29] Other synonyms for prostitute include: courtesan, courtezan, Cyprian, fallen woman, floozy, hooker, hussy, mistress, nymph, painted lady, red-light lady, soiled dove, and whore.[30]

Prostitution: "The act or practice of prostituting, or offering the body to indiscriminate sexual intercourse for hire."[31]

Red Light District: the area or part of town in which houses of prostitution are located.[32]

Respectable: an individual who exhibits "proper behavior or conventional conduct" or a woman who behaves in a traditional, socially acceptable manner.[33]

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze qualitatively how both the genteel women and the prostitutes in late nineteenth century St. Louis dressed, and determine how the prostitutes were perceived by those writing about them at the time. This was done through archival analysis of St. Louis newspapers, census data, and other archival collections.

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[25] Derived from my research in and reading of archival materials.
[26] Seagraves, 167.
[27] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. V (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 3571.
[28] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. VI (New York: The Century Co., 1895) 4791.
[29] Jacques Barzun, Flaubert: A Dictionary of Accepted Ideas (New York: New Directions Publishing, Corp., 1968), 75.
[30] Schulle, 40.
[31] William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation, The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. VI (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 4791.
[32] Seagraves, 168.
[33] American Heritage College Dictionary, 3rd ed., 1162.

2. To investigate the apparel industry in St. Louis during the late nineteenth century and attempt to determine if the industry contributed to women becoming prostitutes.
3. To analyze the Social Evil Ordinance and determine the impact it may have had on the St. Louis prostitutes. Also to determine what the Ordinance revealed about the reasons why women became prostitutes.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. There was a significant population of prostitutes and streetwalkers in St. Louis in the late nineteenth century.
2. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* the *Missouri Republican,* and the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* will contain relevant articles on the Social Evil Ordinance and prostitution, as well as advertisements for stores that sold the most stylish apparel available in St. Louis.
3. A significant number of women (both genteel and prostitute) were exposed to local newspaper articles and advertisements for information on the fashionable apparel of the period and other topics important to women.
4. There were some, albeit limited, opportunities for the genteel women and the prostitutes to see each other in public.

LIMITATIONS

1. The available primary source materials limited the research and defined the dates of the final investigation to emphasize the time of the Social Evil Ordinance, 1870 to 1874, supplemented by other relevant data through the end of the nineteenth century.

2. The lack of actual garments of prostitutes and madams made it difficult for me to determine exactly how the prostitutes of St. Louis may have dressed and I was only able to do limited analysis of photographs and drawings. However, I came to realize that the way the women dressed was not as critical as how they were perceived by those around them.
3. The use of drawn images was also a limitation because the images were idealized representations. The drawn advertisements were of the typical fashions of the era or of the typical styles of clothing offered for sale by the store paying for the advertisement, but were not proof the clothing was worn, or by whom. The drawn images of prostitutes were done with the inherit biases of the author and artist and were done to prove the point of the written material. The ability of the artist who created the images was a further limitation since both the advertisements and the other images were done for the purpose of selling or promoting an object or idea rather than showing the reality of the situation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

About clothes, it's awful. Everything makes you want pretty clothes. . . And then you look at the skirt of your costume, all crumpled at the back. And your hideous underclothes. You look at your hideous underclothes and you think "All right, I'll do anything for good clothes. Anything – anything for clothes."

----- *Jean Rhys (1894-1979)*[1]

In the nineteenth-century as in other periods, apparel was an important aspect of women's lives because a woman's social status was partially shown through the clothing that she wore. For that reason, it was critical for women to dress as well as possible. Dressing well could help middle-class young women enter a higher social circle through marriage. Women also often emulated the fashions of those above them socially so that they could be perceived as belonging to that group. This worried many people in the nineteenth-century since they feared that young women would, as shown by the above quotation, do "anything" in order to dress well. The "anything" that caused greatest unease for the Victorians was the idea that young women willingly sold themselves for a fancy dress or nice jewelry. In other words, the Victorians feared that their young women were going to become prostitutes or at least take a lover in order to dress fashionably.

Prostitution has often been referred to as women's oldest profession, but it has not been considered a respectable occupation to which young women should aspire. Prostitution

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[1] Tobi Tobias, Obsessed by Dress (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 20. Jean Rhys was an author who was raised in the Caribbean and whose published works include Wide Sargasso Sea. Her works were published between 1928 and her death in 1979.

as defined in the Introduction was the exchange of sexual favors for financial gain.[2] Due to their profession, these women are often overlooked with regard to the serious study of fashion history and the possible impact fashion may have had on them and their choice to become prostitutes. Regardless of their profession and the stigma attached to it, these women and their role in the complex history of clothing should be investigated and acknowledged. Equally important is the role these women played in the area of American women's history.

The clothing of prostitutes has rarely been investigated. The effect of fashion and the fashion industry on the lives of madams and prostitutes also has not been analyzed. Clothing did, however, have an impact on and in the lives of these ladies as shown by a report prepared by the Committee of Fifteen in New York in 1902. In the report, the committee found that "the greater the earnings of the prostitute, the richer her attire and the more luxurious her mode of life."[3] Therefore, better paid prostitutes and madams generally had enough money to spend on clothing and, as a result, purchased the best and most stylish apparel that was available to them. Their appearance also affected the amount of money they earned because when they looked better, they could attract a higher quality customer who could pay more for their services.[4]

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[2] Hilary Evans, The Oldest Profession: An Illustrated History of Prostitution (London: David & Charles Publishers, Ltd., 1979), 12 and the title; Anne Seagraves, Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West (Hayden, ID: Wesanne Publications, 1994), ix.

[3] The Committee of Fifteen, The Social Evil: With Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 7. The original report was republished in its entirety with additional information included as Part 3 of the reissued report.

[4] Josie Washburn, The Underworld Sewer; A Prostitute Reflects on Life in the Trade, 1871-1909 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 23.

PROSTITUTION

Entrance into the profession

In the nineteenth-century, the few acceptable career choices open to women included teacher, nurse, servant or shop clerk, but these jobs did not provide a great deal of money. Women who needed money in order to survive often became part-time prostitutes because they earned enough to provide for life's necessities as well as a few luxuries, such as nice clothing, jewelry, or a pet. Therefore, poverty was one of the main reasons why women became prostitutes. Other reasons included the yearning for fashionable clothing or expensive material objects and the desire for a life that could provide more than marriage to a poor man. These reasons ultimately link back to the need for money.[5]

The precise reasons why women entered the profession may generally be grouped into one of three categories; predisposing reasons, attracting reasons, and precipitating reasons. Predisposing reasons include factors from the women's background such as having a mother who was a prostitute or coming from a broken home. Attracting reasons are the ones most commonly researched, since these include the lucrative financial gain obtained by prostitutes, the fashionable clothing the women purchased, and the potentially more interesting or exciting lifestyles of prostitutes. Precipitating reasons include economic pressure induced by a low paying job, persuasion by another prostitute or a pimp, or a love

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[5] Evans, 26-57; Gerilyn G. Tandberg, "Sinning for Silk: Dress for Success Fashions of the New Orleans Storyville Prostitute." Women's Studies International Forum, 13 (1990): 229-248; and Marianna Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse." Victorian Studies, 32 (1989): 168-188.

affair gone wrong. These three types of reasons seem to withstand the test of time and adequately categorize the main reasons why women became prostitutes.[6]

The information on prostitutes of ancient civilizations is incomplete because there are generally not a lot of written records left by the women to explain why they became prostitutes or how they were viewed by other individuals of their time. In ancient Greece, there were four levels of prostitutes. These included the *hetaire*, the *auletrides*, the *dicteriades*, and the *concubines*. The *hetaire* were the upper-class of prostitutes and were like mistresses or kept women of later times. These women usually were associated with men in positions of power and therefore had more power themselves. The second group, the *auletrides*, was usually women who were considered ancient entertainers such as musicians or dancers. *Dicteriades* were the third group and these women were like the streetwalkers or brothel workers of later generations. *Concubines* were the final group and included women who were slaves or who were of the lowest social standing in Greek society. The information on the social status of these women relative to Greek society however does not reveal why or how they became prostitutes.[7]

The women in Victorian England, however, became prostitutes because they were poor, were coerced into it, or simply did not see any other viable options available to them following the death of a guardian or another circumstance that left the women dependent upon their own resources. Many of these women joined the ranks of the prostitutes because they believed that life had nothing better to offer them. The women believed that as prostitutes they could make some choices for themselves, rather than simply being the

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[6] Harry Benjamin, MD and R. E. L. Masters, Prostitution and Morality; A Definitive Report on the Prostitute in Contemporary Society and an Analysis of the Causes and Effects of the Suppression of Prostitution (New York: The Julian Press, Inc., 1964), 88-118.

[7] Benjamin and Masters, 39-45.

property of their husbands or forced to live off the meager wages provided by working as a clerk or in a factory. Again, the details on why Victorian women became prostitutes are incomplete, but many women who were poor felt they did not have any other, better option.[8]

In nineteenth-century America, women became prostitutes because of the few respectable jobs available to them. The red light district in New York City, for example, showed that many women who were involved in the garment industry were also part-time or intermittent prostitutes. In 1839, 17% of all milliners in New York City were confirmed prostitutes and 44% of all milliners practiced prostitution to at least some degree. This latter group consisted of women who were occasional prostitutes; they sold themselves only when the millinery business was not providing them with enough money to survive. Dressmakers, shoe binders, sock sewers, plain sewers, hat trimmers and umbrella sewers were other clothing-related occupations in which women earned some of their money from prostitution. Some clothing manufacturing jobs were seasonal and therefore the workers only received a wage when employed. This further contributed to the problem of poverty experienced by women working various clothing manufacturing trades. Some New York madams also used millinery or dressmaking shops as fronts for their brothels, which further associated these businesses with prostitution in the public's mind. Overall, poverty, poor wages, and the lack of better paying, respectable alternatives were some of the reasons why many New York women who were dressmakers and milliners as well as servants and chambermaids became prostitutes.[9]

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[8] Evans, 58-163.

[9] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920 (New York: W. W. North & Co., 1992) and Marilynn Wood Hill, Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830-1870 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

The fact that some dressmakers, milliners, and apparel factory workers were also prostitutes was prevalent in the American West. Throughout the West, many women became prostitutes because they had little money and not enough education to allow them to do anything else. The towns to which the women moved usually were not large enough to support large numbers of women in other, respectable jobs, such as teaching. Of the few occupations available to women, the careers of dressmaker, milliner and seamstress posed a problem in terms of poor wages that resulted in women turning to prostitution.[10]

In St. Louis, during the time of the Social Evil Ordinance, 1870 to 1874, the prostitutes were required to register with the police. When the women registered, they were asked their "reasons for registering." More than half of the women stated that "choice" was the reason they became prostitutes and therefore had to register with the police. Other reasons why St. Louis women became prostitutes included "poverty, seduction, family trouble, abandonment by the husband, bad company and, in one case, 'husband's desire.' "[11] The evidence also showed that the Social Evil Ordinance limited the number of women who were part-time prostitutes by arresting them as vagrants or as women who violated the registration aspect of the ordinance. Many of the part-time prostitutes were considered streetwalkers since they worked independent of a brothel and therefore had no obvious means of support or regular work, which was required for an individual not to be considered a vagrant. The part-time prostitutes were believed to be more dangerous to the moral fiber of the young men and women of St. Louis and a rowdier, more troublesome group of women

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[10] Kay Reynolds Blair, Ladies of the Lamplight (Colorado Springs, CO: Little London Press, 1971); Anne M. Butler, Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery; Prostitutes in the American West, 1865–90 (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985) 1-24; Paula Petrick, "Capitalists with Rooms; Prostitution in Helena, Montana, 1865-1900." Montana, The Magazine of Western History, 31, 2 (April, 1981): 28-41; and Seagraves.
[11] John Lindenbusch, "The Social Evil Ordinance: Legalized Vice (and Vice Versa)." St. Louis Magazine, 12, 6 (June, 1980): 18.

than the brothel workers. In fact, "full-time prostitutes working in Almond Street brothels comprised a relatively coherent class" as far as the police and city officials believed and therefore were not as frequently arrested.[12]

As the nineteenth century came to a close, women were still working as prostitutes throughout the United States and often became prostitutes due to financial reasons. However, during the Progressive Era in America, 1900-1918, many women also became prostitutes voluntarily. The ultimate reason for their choice was still probably one of money and the things that money could provide to poor women with few other choices and resources. However, once the women entered the profession they also entered a subculture with its own value system, social relations, and class hierarchy that allowed them the freedom to make their own decisions regarding the lifestyle they had chosen.[13]

Social mores and prostitution

Throughout history, prostitution has often been thought of as a necessary evil. In the ancient civilizations such as Rome, prostitutes were an accepted part of society and were regulated by the Guild of Prostitutes. The brothels in Rome also could not be open during normal working hours so that men were not distracted from their jobs. Therefore, the brothels were open from 4 pm to daybreak. In Greece, the prostitutes had to register with the government and then their activities and their clothing were also regulated. [14]

The idea of prostitution as a necessary evil was also prevalent in the nineteenth century American West, where newly formed frontier towns had extremely uneven gender

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[12] Jeffrey S. Adler, "Streetwalkers, Degraded Outcasts, and Good-for-Nothing Huzzies: Women and the Dangerous Class in Antebellum St. Louis." Journal of Social History, 25, 4, (Summer, 1992): 737-755.
[13] Ruth Rosen, The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), *xi.*
[14] Evans, 6-157.

distribution, with a large number of single men and a small number of women. The few women in town provided the men with domestic assistance such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and sewing, as well as with entertainment. The entertainment included prostitution in addition to simply dancing in the hurdy-gurdy houses or singing at various saloons and theaters. It was not until towns were firmly established, with a large number of women, that prostitution became unacceptable; however, the degree of acceptance did vary from town to town.[15]

In San Francisco, the prostitutes maintained their respectable status despite their profession. The people of San Francisco did not hold strongly to the belief that once a young woman was lost to prostitution she was irretrievably soiled. Women in San Francisco, as in other parts of the country, became prostitutes primarily for financial reasons and often were looking for ways out of the profession, such as marriage. In fact, some of the prostitutes in San Francisco were able to marry out of the profession.[16]

The red-light districts and the women's lives

In the red-light districts, the women's lives were difficult, and within the district a definite social hierarchy existed. The brothel owners and madams were at the highest level whereas the crib girls and the "hog-ranch" women were on the lowest rung of the prostitution social ladder. The hierarchy of the red-light districts was not static and women could and did move up or down the ladder throughout their lives. There were also some women who were

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[13] Jennifer Schulle, "The Madams of Denver's Market Street: Their Clothing and Their Lives" (M. A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1996), 3-34.

[16] Jacqueline Baker Barnhart, The Fair but Frail: Prostitution in San Francisco, 1849-1900 (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1986) and Curt Gentry, The Madams of San Francisco: An Irreverent History of the City by the Golden Gate (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964).

able to move out of the district and live a fairly normal life, but those examples were few and far between.[17]

Hog-ranches were establishments unto themselves and were frequently located in areas too small to support an entire red-light district. They were a combination of saloons, gambling halls, and brothels, located near forts in Wyoming or other western territories. The women on the hog ranches therefore only serviced soldiers who usually did not have a great deal of money. Consequently, the soldiers often paid the women with whatever they had available which included whole or partial uniforms.[18]

The red-light districts were so labeled because of the red lights that certain trainmen were required to carry with them at all times. The term originated in Denver, since that was the home of a large district and many railroads. After a train arrived in town and unloaded, the trainmen took their red lights and sought entertainment. The men usually left their red lights outside the door of the crib or brothel and that resulted in a street lined with red lights, hence the name red-light district. The red-light district in Denver has been well researched, especially since it was one of the most prominent in the West. The women of Denver's red-light district were a colorful and fascinating group that aided the overall growth of the city since they contributed to the economy.[19]

Storyville, in New Orleans, was a notorious nineteenth-century red-light district. Storyville was home to prostitution, as well as Jazz, and beset with many criminal activities

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[17] Caroline Bancroft, Six Racy Madams of Colorado (Boulder, CO: Johnson Publishing Co., 1965); and Anne M. Butler, Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery; Prostitutes in the American West, 1865 – 90 (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985) 1-24.

[18] Larry K. Brown, The Hog Ranches of Wyoming: Liquor, Lust, and Lies Under Sagebrush Skies (Glendo, WY: High Plains Press, 1995).

[19] Schulle, 9-34 and Clark Secrest, Hell's Belles: Denver's Brides of the Multitudes (Aurora, CO: Hindsight Historical Publications, 1996).

including shootings, drug use, and assaults. *The Mascot,* an uninhibited New Orleans newspaper, printed information about the district as well as commentaries on various subjects including how women became prostitutes. One image of particular note from *The Mascot* is a drawn cover image showing the inside of a dressmaker's shop as a place of prostitution and vice (Figure 1). The loose nature of the establishment is further revealed by the loose gown on the woman in the front of the image. Gowns of this style were strictly meant for home, so no respectable woman would have worn this type of robe in public. The woman in the back is obviously in her corset and petticoats. She appears as if her skirt is being fitted or adjusted on her while she is drinking a beverage that made her appear quite happy. The drink also was not in a teacup so it was probably not tea. Another woman in the back of the shop looks as if she may have passed out because it was unlikely that she went to a dressmaker's shop for a nap. The gentleman entering the shop with the pleased look on his face further reveals the true nature of the establishment because men simply had no legitimate reason to visit a dressmaker's shop. If men needed their clothes altered, they went to a tailor. Most tailors in the nineteenth century were men; however, the tailor may have employed women to help with the sewing, but the women would not have taken measurements or interacted directly with the tailor's clients. Of particular distress was the young lady, a mere child, serving drinks that were probably alcoholic. The accompanying article stated that "two-thirds of the so called fashionable dressmaking establishments were no more or less than resorts where fashionable women collected to drink beer. . . or meet their lovers if they so chose or desired."[20] The article also stated that young girls were frequently employed by the dressmakers and then "were forced to mingle in the company of the dissolute creatures" and

[20] *The Mascot*, November 23, 1889, 2.

as a result the girls "contracted habits that have taken them into the ranks of sin and shame, and made them dangerous and outcast creatures."[21] The dressmakers also frequently sent the girls "to and from convenient bar-rooms for intoxicants to supply the jolly customers," which further exposed the young girls to the negative influences of a disreputable life.[22] This further reinforces the idea previously mentioned that dressmakers' establishments were sometimes used as fronts for assignation houses. The prostitutes and madams in New Orleans, as in other cities, existed within their hierarchy and worked to advance up the hierarchy if they were unable to leave the district.[23]

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[21] *The Mascot*, November 23, 1889, 2.
[22] *The Mascot*, November 23, 1889, 2.
[23] Wendy Gamber, The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930 (Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1997), 18, 73-74; and Al Rose, Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974).

Figure 1 –"What the Fashionable Dressmaking Establishments Are."[24]

Legal matters

Throughout the nineteenth century, various cities briefly legalized prostitution or the district in which it was conducted to control it, but, by the turn of the century, prostitution was illegal throughout the United States. St. Louis was one of the cities to use the legalization of prostitution as a method to regulate it. Prior to legalization, however, St. Louis police officers used vagrancy and other laws to regulate prostitution. The vagrancy

[24] *The Mascot*, November 23, 1889, cover page.

laws were vague and structured so that the police could arrest almost anyone. The women who were arrested were usually more public in the manner in which they practiced their profession. The vagrancy laws were also used to arrest individuals, both men and women, the police thought were consorting with criminals or people who seemed to be loitering on the street or who did not seem to have any obvious source of income.[25] The police continued to use the vagrancy laws to arrest women believed to be prostitutes even after the Social Evil Ordinance was enacted, but the women arrested were usually streetwalkers who worked independently of a brothel. The law and the police protected madams and their girls from arrest and the "interference of others, even reformers and concerned relatives."[26] The vagrancy law clause that allowed for the arresting of certain prostitutes and the protection of others was rescinded in 1873.[27]

In the late nineteenth-century, St. Louis was a growing city whose industrial district included factories making clothing and textiles, as well as tobacco and alcoholic beverages, to name just a few. The industries employed a large labor force that included both men and women; therefore, there was a large population of working women subsisting on meager wages. Generally, the women's wages in apparel manufacturing ranged from $2.25 to $6.00 a week. The census records of the time show that there were brothels located near the manufacturing areas and the docks.[28] The men who worked on the docks or in the manufacturing plants were also potential customers for the brothels. Some of the women who worked in the clothing manufacturing businesses could have worked part-time in

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[25] Adler, 737-755.
[26] Adler, 743.
[27] James Neal Primm, Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980. 3rd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), 123.
[28] Population census tracts, St. Louis, Missouri, 1870; and Population census tracts, St. Louis, Missouri, 1880.

brothels in order to supplement their meager incomes with the more substantial earnings from prostitution. This idea will be further explored in chapter 5.

By 1870, the red-light district was well established and the problem of prostitution was accepted as necessary for the economic growth of St. Louis; therefore, the city council legalized prostitution with the passage of the Social Evil Ordinance (Appendix). The original goals of the Ordinance were threefold. The first was to slow the spread of venereal disease by subjecting prostitutes to weekly inspections by physicians appointed by the Board of Health. The prostitutes also paid hospital dues upon completion of their weekly inspection; then the women received a certificate verifying the inspection and stating they had passed.[29]

The second goal of the Ordinance was to treat women who were diagnosed with venereal disease and then attempt to reform the women, so as to halt the spread of the disease. When a prostitute was diagnosed with a venereal disease, she was to report to a specially designated hospital, commonly known as the Social Evil Hospital, for treatment. The hospital was to be built and funded by the proceeds from the weekly dues paid by the prostitutes and the license fees paid by the individuals who ran the brothels or bawdy houses.[30]

The final goal of the ordinance was to control both the locations in which the prostitutes lived and their public behavior. The registered women were prohibited from soliciting on the streets, but were essentially allowed to conduct their business only within their registered residences so long as their customers came to them. The women were not

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[29] Duane R. Sneddeker, "Regulating Vice; Prostitution and the St. Louis Social Evil Ordinance, 1870-1874." Gateway Heritage, 11, 2 (Fall, 1990): 20-47.
[30] Snedekker, 20-47.

allowed to go out onto or be visible from the streets and advertise themselves as prostitutes, and thereby undermine the morals of upstanding, albeit weak or naïve, young men.[31]

The three aforementioned goals were the expectations that the city council had for the ordinance. The law, however, proved ineffective because few prostitutes agreed to register with the city. The ordinance also became increasingly unpopular with and an embarrassment to the citizens of St. Louis and by association to the citizens of Missouri. In 1874, the state declared the Social Evil Ordinance was contradictory to the laws in the state of Missouri. Consequently, the city council rescinded the ordinance in 1874.[32]

Storyville was unique in that it was a legally recognized district of prostitution although the act of prostitution was still considered illegal. However, the district itself was legally defined in terms of location and who could live and work there. The prostitutes were not allowed to live or work in any other part of the city, but the ordinance that set aside Storyville was worded so as to imply that prostitution was not legal, but that it could only be done within the district. [33]

The methods New Yorkers used to attempt to regulate the sex industry included private organizations such as the Society for the Suppression of Vice and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The police of the nineteenth-century did less than the public to regulate prostitution and the tenderloin district. The district was thus known because many of the police profited from agreements with the madams or prostitutes and the profits allowed them to dine on fine tenderloin steaks. New York never formally legalized

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[31] Snedekker, 20-47.
[32] Snedekker, 20-47 and Katherine T. Corbett, In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Press, 1999), 101-169.
[33] Al Rose, Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974).

prostitution, as did St. Louis, but there was an informal acceptance of it by the police and city officials. The acceptance resulted in the regulation and organization of the industry and aided the policemen individually since many were hired to protect saloons or brothels from unruly customers.[34]

The prostitutes in Victorian London were also under governmental regulations. Although the profession itself was not illegal, brothels were illegal and any man who earned his living from prostitution was committing a crime. The prostitutes in nineteenth-century England also were not welcome or respectable and most ordinary citizens tried to ignore that the profession even existed. Even worse, many men publicly ignored or disapproved of the prostitutes, but visited them in the evenings. Many Victorian men were hypocrites about the profession since they spoke of morality during the day and acted sinfully during the night.[35]

The other side of prostitution

In the Old West, the prostitutes were not purely bad women who cared about no one but themselves. Many of the "soiled doves" were also good women who helped their towns when times were tough. For example, Bessie Harper of Silver City, New Mexico gave food and coal to poor families every Christmas for as many years as she was able. Molly b'Dam, a madam of Murray, Idaho, was another example of benevolent prostitutes who helped their towns. During a small-pox epidemic in the winter of 1887-1888, Molly called a town meeting and criticized the good citizens for not doing more to help the sick. The townsfolk were suitably chastised and began to help each other through the epidemic. The hotels and brothels became hospitals and Molly's girls became nurses. All the town's citizens, both

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[34] Gilfoyle, 133-252.
[35] Evans, 6-157.

prostitutes and respectable people, worked with each other throughout the crisis. Molly worked tirelessly through the epidemic, but her efforts were not rewarded. Molly developed consumption and died on January 17, 1888.[36]

Julia Bulette of Virginia City, Nevada was a prostitute who donated money to charity, helped fight a small-pox epidemic, and gave assistance to the fire department. As a result of the help she provided, Julia was made an honorary member of the Virginia City fire department. Unfortunately, Julia was brutally murdered in 1867. Following her death, the men of the town mourned her loss, gave her an expensive funeral, and built a monument in her honor. The monument read: "Angel to Miners, Friend to Firemen and Administrator to the Needy."[37] Chicago Joe Hensley was a saloon and brothel owner from Helena, Montana whose reputation for aiding local businessmen was as well known as her reputation for providing drinks and dances to the local working men.[38]

Apparel and appearance

The apparel of prostitutes has not been studied extensively, but, in at least some cities, the women who earned the most money dressed in the finest apparel. For example, the prostitutes in nineteenth-century San Francisco "were the most elegantly dressed women" in town.[39] The San Francisco prostitutes also "took great care to be as fashionable as possible."[40] Since appearance affected a prostitute's earning potential, the women in the upper levels of the hierarchy usually spent a substantial amount of money on their clothing.

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[36] Schulle, 29.
[37] Schulle, 30.
[38] Rex C. Myers, "An Inning for Sin: Chicago Joe and her Hurdy-Gurdy Girls." Montana, The Magazine of Western History, 27, 2 (Spring 1977): 24-33; and Seagraves.
[39] Barnhart, 23.
[40] Barnhart, 23.

In general, the women spent more money on their clothing than on any other expense. Furthermore, "dressing well was a requirement of the job" for prostitutes.[41] The professional, full-time prostitutes were able to spend more money on clothing and accessories than the part-time streetwalkers because the full-time prostitutes earned so much more money and often were kept by their wealthy clientele. The fact that they dressed well then further improved their relative status and earning potential.[42]

Prostitutes also enjoyed buying fashionable clothing, which had previously been denied to them when they were simply poor, genteel young women. As prostitutes, they could afford to buy any of the clothing offered to them by traveling salesmen, but the women often chose clothing that somehow identified them as prostitutes such as wigs, short skirts, drawers, boots, or make-up. These clothing items were often deemed "whorish" and therefore may have differed in terms of length, color, or sheerness, from the drawers, skirts, or boots that genteel women wore during the same period.[43]

Throughout history, there have been some known regulations regarding prostitutes and their appearance. In ancient Rome, prostitutes were required to dress in a distinctive manner that included a blond wig. One infamous prostitute from ancient Rome even had nails put into the sole of her shoe in a pattern that spelled out, "Follow me" and included an erect phallus. The prostitute then left her calling card in the dirt everywhere she went to advertise to potential new customers. Therefore, the regulation of a prostitute's clothing was not a new concept in the history of prostitution.[44]

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[41] Gamber, 74.
[42] Barnhart, 23, 53, 73; Hill, 109-182; Rosen, 106-107; and Charles Winick and Paul M. Kinsie, The Lively Commerce: Prostitution in the United States (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 30.
[43] Rosen, 7-48.
[44] Evans, 6-157.

The prostitutes in Britain in the last half of the nineteenth-century "were as admired by matrons and misses as by husbands and sons; the harlots' fashions were copied in less lavish materials, but as accurately as industrious needle could achieve."[45] Middle- and upper-class Victorian women including Royalty wore a style of hat called the pork-pie, originally made fashionable by Catherine "Skittles" Walters, an upper-class prostitute. Skittles, as she was popularly known, was a woman of humble beginnings who became the mistress of several influential men in London including Lord Hartington, later the eighth Duke of Devonshire.[46]

The madams and prostitutes wore the latest styles and purchased expensive dresses and lingerie, which they considered a normal business expense. In fact, some madams in San Francisco and other Western cities actually advertised their houses by having their ladies dress in their finest clothes and stroll along the city's most public walkway. Some of the women also carried pet poodles, which were a common accessory for many Western prostitutes. Unfortunately for the poodles, no genteel woman wanted to own one for fear that she too would be considered a prostitute. [47] In other red-light districts, such as Storyville in New Orleans, many women of the district wore striped stockings. Stockings of this type were unusual and were meant to be shown off which is something that no genteel woman would ever do. These types of stocking were also expensive and therefore could only be afforded by the better-paid workingwomen. [48]

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[45] Michael Harrison, Fanfare of Strumpets, (London: W. H. Allen and Co., Ltd., 1971), 5-6.
[46] Harrison, 5-7.
[47] Seagraves, 63-67 and 23-27.
[48] Al Rose, Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974).

The story of Ida Mackay of Sioux City, Iowa is an amusing tale of a prostitute who had some trouble with regard to her appearance and her two vastly different occupations. For one job, Ida waited tables and washed dishes at a respectable boarding house. For the other job, she was a lady of the evening in a house by the Sioux City stockyards. Apparently, Ida had two specific uniforms, but on one unfortunate day she wore her prostitution apparel to the boarding house. The shocked matron who owned the respectable establishment fired Ida on the spot and had her escorted across town by a lawman who then closed down the brothel in which Ida also worked. There is not much detail about the incorrect outfit Ida wore to her boarding house job except that it was flashy and meant to attract a man's attention.[49]

Another interesting anecdote is the tale of Old Mother Featherlegs Shepherd, a prostitute whose nickname came about as the result of her appearance. In 1876, she was the owner and operator of a hog ranch located near present-day Lusk, Wyoming. Featherlegs had red hair and frequently was seen wearing red bloomers or harem pants with ribbon ties around her ankles. According to stories from the area, when Featherlegs was outside in the Wyoming wind or on horseback, she reminded the local men of a hen with feathers on its legs. Since she was also the madam of that particular hog ranch, she came to be known as "Old Mother Featherlegs." The details about Featherlegs life are unclear as is information pertaining to how her bloomers actually looked or even of what fabric they were constructed, but she was known for her particular style of apparel.[50]

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[49] Bruce Carlson, Some Awfully Tame But Kinda Funny Stories About Early Iowa Ladies of the Evening (Deep River, IA: Quixote Press, 1989).
[50] Brown, 21-37.

AMERICA DURING THE GILDED AGE

America in the late nineteenth-century was a growing country that was transforming from a primarily agricultural and rural country into an urban nation ruled by industry. The last thirty years of the nineteenth century saw the greatest amount of growth. That period is also referred to as the Gilded Age. The term was from the title of a book written by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in 1873. The book was a satire of the speculation in business ventures and the corruption in politics.[51]

During the Gilded Age, America grew physically because eight new states were admitted to the Union. Colorado was the first of this group when it was admitted in 1876, followed by the Dakotas, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, and finally Utah in 1896. As the number of states increased, the country's population also doubled with almost 76 million people by 1900. The population not only grew, but began to spread throughout the West as more states were admitted to the Union. The growing and spreading population resulted in the growth of more cities throughout the Midwestern and Western states.[52]

As the nation grew, so too did the rail lines. People were spreading across the expanding country and needed a faster and more efficient manner to transport themselves and their supplies. The first transcontinental rail line was completed in 1869 at Promontory, Utah. The first rail line not alone opened up the West, but it significantly contributed to the subsequent growth in the West. Following the first East-to-West rail line, there was a dramatic increase in the mileage of railroad tracks throughout the country. In 1870, there were only about 53,000 miles of railroad tracks throughout the country. Between 1870 and

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[51] Charles W. Calhoun, ed., The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996), xi-xix.
[52] Calhoun, xi-xix.

1900, over 140,000 miles of tracks were added, further transforming America from an agrarian into an industrial economy. The increased miles of tracks also provided the fast and efficient transportation that a rapidly growing country needed. The Eads Bridge in St. Louis also significantly aided this growth since it was the only way trains could travel across the Mississippi River during this period. Eads Bridge was completed in 1874 and was the first, main path for a train traveling east or west across the country.[53]

The Industrial Revolution in America further aided the country's transformation into an industrial empire. America had abundant natural resources, miles of railroad tracks, and a growing labor force, both immigrant and native, that all contributed to the industrialization of the country. In 1860, America was still a poorly developed industrial power, but by 1890 the United States surpassed Britain, France, and Germany. The value of America's manufactured goods also was nearly equal to the total value of goods manufactured in those three countries. During the Gilded Age, two distinct manufacturing belts developed, one extending from Maine to Virginia and the other extending from Buffalo and Pittsburgh to Milwaukee and St. Louis. With expanded railroads and the increase in manufactured goods, various businesses within the cities also began to grow. These businesses included grocers, dry goods stores, and saloons as well as service-related occupations such as dressmakers, laundresses, tailors, and undertakers.[54]

American industrialization was improving, but the economy was in upheaval during the Gilded Age, with two depressions, from 1873 to 1877 and from 1893 to 1897. The

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[53] Calhoun, xi-xix, Sean Dennis Cashman, America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt, 3rd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 1-35; Primm, 272-297; and John Anthony Scott, The Story of America, (Washington, DC: The National Geographic Society, 1984), 227-247.
[54] Cashman, 1-35; and John H. Cary, Julius Weinberg, and Thomas L. Hartshorne, eds., The Social Fabric: American Life from the Civil War to the Present, Vol. II, 6th ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 55.

second depression was the most severe and caused the failure of over 500 banks, over 15,000 businesses, and 74 railroads. The unsteady economy also resulted in labor unrest. The economy was transforming from an agricultural to an industrial base and labor was moving from the farms into the cities' manufacturing districts. During the Gilded Age, America was fast becoming a country of wage earners who had to depend upon others for their livelihood. This caused problems since the wages were not always sufficient for survival, and actually decreased when the economy worsened. These problems were exacerbated during both depressions when the unemployment rate was at least 16 per cent. Technically, the standard of living increased during the Gilded Age, but the improvements were not equally experienced by all workers. The skilled craft workers were at the top of the worker hierarchy. These workers were usually white men born in America, England, or Germany. Unskilled workers and those who were not white men experienced a lower standard of living. However, all workers lived "precariously close to the prospect of poverty."[55] A miner in Minnesota expressed the economic hardships of American workers best when he said, "If we eat we can't dress, and if we dress we don't eat."[56] Most American workers regularly experienced similar working conditions which included "low wages, long hours (the twelve-hour day was not uncommon), harsh conditions, abusive managers, and high accident rates."[57] These poor working conditions resulted in multiple instances of protests throughout the country. For example, in the 1880s there were at least ten thousand lock-outs or strikes.[58]

Labor reform movements were another way workers used to fight for better working conditions. However, the American labor force was increasingly diverse and spread across a

[55] Calhoun, 44.
[56] Calhoun, 44.
[57] Calhoun, 44.
[58] Calhoun, 39-61.

variety of jobs. For those reasons, the labor force did not come together to advocate a common reform goal. The reform movement only truly succeeded when national organizations formed to speak for a diverse labor force. The first was the National Labor Union. The NLU grew out of other individual labor unions that already had national organization. In 1866 a congress of labor unions was held in Baltimore. The meeting was attended by seventy-seven delegates who represented over 60,000 workers in their particular industries. At that meeting, the delegates launched the NLU to advocate a system of worker's cooperatives that were managed by both producers and consumers. The NLU also promoted a federal Department of Labor that would look out for the best interests of the American labor force. An eight-hour day was another goal of the NLU. A total of six states, including Missouri, enacted some sort of eight-hour day laws, but the laws had so many exceptions or loopholes that they were essentially ineffective. The NLU also reluctantly recognized the importance of women in labor and admitted Susan B. Anthony, Mary McDonald, and Mary Kellogg Putnam as delegates to the 1868 convention. However, when Anthony encouraged the Protective Union to be used to break strikes against the wishes of the NLU, she was refused admittance to the 1869 convention. That started the decline in support of women's labor concerns within the NLU and "by 1872 most women's unions had disappeared."[59] The NLU ceased as it was then known in 1872 when it became the National Labor Reform party.[60]

The American Federation of Labor was one national organization interested in labor reform. It began in 1886, and was composed of individual labor unions. The AFL

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[59] Cashman, 105.
[60] Cashman, 103-107.

recognized that its very survival depended upon the existence the individual national unions within its ranks, but those unions did not need the AFL to continue to survive. The AFL also had state divisions to promote labor legislation. The AFL taxed the member unions and kept the money in a strike fund account. The AFL supported the efforts of the unions to gain reform from the various employers. When the employers would not reform, the AFL backed the unions' ability to strike and the taxes provided financial aid to the workers.[61]

The diverse nature of the labor force was why local labor reform efforts seldom worked. During the Gilded Age, the American labor force was still composed primarily of white men, but it also included African Americans, immigrants, and women. During the Gilded Age, women were entering the work force in greater numbers because, as industries grew, the businesses had additional jobs and more frequently hired women to fill these positions. In 1870, women were 14 percent of the total labor force in America; and by 1900, women were 21 percent of the American labor force. While women were always a minority of the American work force, the number of women workers continuously increased throughout the Gilded Age. Women also were working at a greater variety of jobs outside the traditional roles of wife and mother; roles that were idealized by middle- and upper-class people in the late nineteenth century. Women workers were also warned by doctors, ministers, or periodicals that their work outside the home potentially made them unfit "for marriage and motherhood."[62] Women who worked were usually young, single women who lived in the growing cities throughout the country. These women also worked because they or their families needed the money and not just because they wanted to work. However these

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[61] Cashman, 121-124.
[62] Calhoun, 122.

women were considered just temporary employees who would only remain employed until they married and took up their true calling as wives and mothers.[63]

The industrial revolution also enabled more wives to pursue activities outside the home, such as charity or social work. Much of women's social work began as women's clubs during the Gilded Age. Clubs allowed women to get together and discuss matters of interest to them and thereby expanded the women's sphere to include more than just the home. The clubs also were socially acceptable, since women gathered together for personal as well as public improvements. Through the clubs women provided aid to the poor in the form of money, food, and moral enrichment. The clubs grew into national organizations that worked towards various goals including temperance and suffrage, as well as educational and health reform to name just a few.[64]

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was one such organization that, as the name implied, originally worked to limit men's consumption of alcohol. However, the WCTU soon began to advance woman's suffrage along with temperance. The WCTU began in 1873 and worked for temperance because the women believed that alcohol was the ultimate cause of most family and social problems. The WCTU believed that abuse, poverty, and desertion were caused by the excessive consumption of alcohol. These factors then contributed to the problems of "crime, prostitution, and urban filth."[65] Therefore, according

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[63] Calhoun, 111-135; and Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 75-80.
[64] Calhoun, 111-135 and Alice Kessler-Harris, Women Have Always Worked: A Historical Overview (New York: The McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 108-119.
[65] Kessler-Harris, Women Have Always Worked, 113.

to WCTU tenets, the major problems experienced by Americans during the Gilded Age would be eliminated simply by eradicating the consumption of alcohol.[66]

Dress reform was another area in which women were quite interested in making changes that would improve their own lives. Bustles characterized the fashions of the 1870s and 1880s. The large elliptical skirts typical of the 1860s began to diminish and the emphasis shifted to the rear of the dress until the generously proportioned bustles of the 1880s appeared. The 1870s and 1880s were also a time when women's outfits had a great deal of decorative detail. In the 1870s, the bustles were bulky and emphasized the entire back portion of the woman's skirt from waist to lower leg. By the 1880s, the emphasis of the bustle was more concentrated at the woman's derrière so that the bustle extended straight back from her waist and the remainder of the skirt hung to the floor. Bodices of the time were tight with high collars and long sleeves. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, decoration and trims were popular and skirts were often made of two fabrics to add visual interest. Ruffles, bows, extra buttons, pleats, lace, and fringe were all common trims used on bodices or skirts.[67]

The styles of the period required substantial support in the form of undergarments, including tightly laced corsets, corset covers, chemises, petticoats, bustles, and pads. The dresses and corresponding undergarments potentially caused harm to the wearers; the harm was blamed on the number of layers, the resulting weight of the clothing, the full-length of the skirts, and the constricting nature of the corsets. The resultant injury to women's health was one of the primary complaints of dress reform advocates. Dress reform advocates had

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[66] Kessler-Harris, Women Have Always Worked, 108-119.
[67] Blanche Payne, Geitel Winakor, and Jane Farrell-Beck, The History of Costume: From Ancient Mesopotamia Through the Twentieth Century, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 493-540.

various and differing backgrounds; and included health reformers, doctors, club women, artists, and educators. All reformers agreed that women's clothing was unhealthy, but disagreed on precisely how to reform it. Some advocated simply changing the design of women's undergarments so that they were looser and less burdensome without altering the styles of the outer garments. Other reformers suggested entirely new clothing styles for women, such as the Bloomer costume, one of the early and better known styles of reform dress. It added a bifurcated garment that was worn under a shorter skirt. Other types of reform dress also included looser, artistic gowns, as well as reform undergarments. The reform dress movement was not universally accepted by women of the late nineteenth century, but aspects of reform dress were eventually incorporated into women's apparel. For example, girls' gymnasium outfits of the early twentieth century resembled the earlier Bloomer costume as did women's swimming apparel. Although not universally accepted, dress reform was part of many other reform movements that occurred during the Gilded Age. Many women who fought for social reform also incorporated dress reform into their arguments and may even have worn some form of reform dress, but there is no evidence showing just how many women actually adopted reform style clothing. [68]

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[68] Patricia A. Cunningham, Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art (Kent, OH: The Kent State university Press, 2003), 1-24, 203-205.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

A person who sees only fashion in fashion is a fool.

----- Honoré de Balzac *(1799-1850)*[1]

The research methods used throughout this investigation were traditional historical methods such as archival analysis of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are those that were written, produced or created during or just after the time or event under investigation. For the purposes of this study, primary sources included books and newspaper or magazine articles, newspaper advertisements, photographs, police reports, public records of the city of St. Louis, census tracts, and city directories. Secondary sources are those that were produced significantly after the event such as the history books and articles discussed throughout this study.[2]

The first step in any research project is to select a topic of interest that has not already been thoroughly investigated and the findings extensively published. After selecting the general topic of prostitutes and their clothing, I used secondary sources to narrow my focus to St. Louis during the late nineteenth century. This included the dates of the Social Evil Ordinance and the time of intense growth for St. Louis as well as the rest of the country. As I went through the resources, I looked for the following key points: the apparel or clothing of the prostitutes, discussion of clothing as an incentive for becoming a prostitute, and any

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[1] Tobi Tobias, Obsessed by Dress (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 9.
[2] Allan J. Lichtman and Valerie French, Historians and the Living Past: The Theory and Practice of Historical Study (Arlington Heights, IL: Harland Davidson, Inc., 1978), 18-19.

mention of labor problems and the low wages women received. I also was open to any other relevant information that I uncovered.

The people of the Victorian Age were fond of euphemisms and generally made use of them when discussing sensitive topics such as prostitution. Therefore, I created a list of euphemisms for the words "prostitute" and "brothel" so that I would not overlook any pertinent resources that used an alternative term. The euphemism list, shown in Table 1 at the end of this chapter, also aided me while I read the primary source materials that used terms common and familiar to both the author and nineteenth-century audience but unfamiliar to a twenty-first century audience.

The research questions, listed in Chapter 1, went through several revisions as I discovered the extent of available resources and what information was lacking from them. With the revised research questions, I traveled to St. Louis for research and to experience the city which I was investigating. The Library of the Missouri Historical Society has an extensive archival collection on both St. Louis and Missouri history. The archival resources from St. Louis also revealed another euphemism for "prostitute" that was unique to the legal circumstances in late nineteenth-century St. Louis; the term was "vagrant." The St. Louis police used the vagrancy law to arrest a variety of unscrupulous characters, including streetwalkers, who caused trouble and committed crimes throughout the city. The problem with the vagrancy law was that just because all streetwalkers were technically vagrants, not all vagrants were streetwalkers. Furthermore, a vagrant could have been anyone, male or female, who did not have a stable source of income or a regular place of residence. This was an important point to remember while going through the police records, since I could not assume that any information about vagrants was about streetwalkers. For example, I could

not differentiate between streetwalker vagrants and the other vagrants, especially with regard to the police statistical data that only reported the total number of vagrants arrested in a given year. The police records merely differentiated between men and women, but did not state the vagrant's previous employment or lifestyle.

Throughout my research, I used newspapers, including the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; the *Missouri Republican*, renamed the *St. Louis Republican*; and the *St. Louis Daily Globe*, later called the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. I examined the newspapers for advertisements for retail establishments in St. Louis as well as for pertinent articles on the Social Evil Ordinance and any relevant editorial or opinion articles about the ordinance, the madams and prostitutes, or the role of women in St. Louis during the time. The advertisements were useful in revealing the types of clothing available to all the women of nineteenth-century St. Louis.

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* was a good general newspaper that was quite popular and had great longevity, since it still exists today. However, it did not begin publication until 1879 so the *Post-Dispatch* obviously did not provide any information on the social evil ordinance, which lasted from 1870 until 1874. The *St. Louis Daily Globe* began publication in 1873 and continued daily publications as the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* through 1986. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* was considered to have a more Republican presentation and political outlook whereas the *Missouri Republican* was more Democratic in viewpoint. This was somewhat confusing, but all three newspapers revealed pertinent data. The *Missouri Republican* was in publication in 1869 and continued daily publications through 1888. It was also useful during the 1870s since the newspaper reprinted the complete text of all the newly

passed city ordinances and overviews of City Council, Board of Health and other committee meetings.

An author who studied prostitutes in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the late nineteenth-century, made extensive reference to census records, a resource I had not originally considered.[3] I examined St. Louis population census tracts or schedules from 1870 and 1880. The handwritten census tracts from 1890 are no longer available because most of these were destroyed by fire in 1921. The published 1890 census summaries are the only records that still exist for Missouri, so these were also examined. The handwritten population schedules were done by the census takers who visited each household within their area and listed the occupants' names and occupations. Upon examining the census tracts, I found several instances where the women did report their occupations as either "prostitute" or "whore." Some of the madams also reported themselves as "assignation house"-keepers; the other women in the house were simply listed as inmates. The general statistical abstracts from 1870 through 1900 provided data on general population trends in Missouri as well as additional data on manufacturing, education, employment, and crime.

Even though the majority of my resources from St. Louis were from the 1870s, the general ideas that I was researching went beyond simply the 1870s, which was why I also made extensive use of other resources from later periods. The ideas that I was studying included broad concepts such as poverty or the desire to be fashionable, and these concepts were not specific to just the 1870s. Many of the resources that I used, such as the books by Jane Addams or Mason Long, were published later than the 1870s, but the authors were

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[3] Joel Best, "Careers in Brothel Prostitution: St. Paul, 1865-1883," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, XII, 4, (Spring, 1982), pp.597-619.

products of the late nineteenth century and were therefore influenced by the popular beliefs of the period. For these reasons, I used resources that came after the dates of the Social Evil Ordinance, 1870-1874.

Table 1 – EUPHEMISM LIST

Prostitute
Bawd
Courtesan or courtezan
Cyprian
Demimondaine
Fair but frail
Fallen woman
Fancy lady/woman
Floozy
Giddy girl
Harlot
Hooker
Hussy
Lady/woman of easy virtue
Lady/woman of the evening
Lady/woman of ill-fame
Lady/women of ill-repute
Lady/woman of the night
Lady/woman of the town
Madam
Magdalen(e) (a reformed prostitute)
Mistress
Nymph
Painted lady
Red light lady
Soiled dove
Sporting girl/woman
Streetwalker
Strumpet
Vagrant
Whore
Woman of the town

Brothel
Bagnio
Bawdy house
Boarding house
Bordello
Hog-ranch
House of assignation
House of ill-fame
House of ill-repute
Immoral house
Mansion de joie
Parlor house
Saloon
Sporting house

Prostitution
Social evil

CHAPTER 4

MISSOURI AND ST. LOUIS HISTORY

As long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long can there be no question at all but that splendor of dress is a crime.

-----John Ruskin (1819-1900)[1]

According to Ruskin, worrying about clothes more than the needs of others was equivalent to a crime. He believed that people from the middle and upper classes were more preoccupied with appearing fashionable than they were with the problems of those less fortunate. People of the Gilded Age were particular about their clothing and how they were perceived, but they also worked towards resolving the problems they saw in society. In this chapter, the basic history of Missouri has been examined, followed by the history of St. Louis. Particular emphasis has been given to the city's population, industrial growth, charitable work; and, of course, crime with a specific section on the Social Evil Ordinance.

MISSOURI

The territory that came to be known as Missouri was originally part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Missouri achieved statehood on August 10, 1821 when it became the twenty-fourth state to enter the Union. Slavery characterized Missouri's history in the early nineteenth century and it slowed Missouri's acceptance into the Union. The Missouri Compromise naturally aided the state's entrance into the United States because it allowed

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[1] Tobi Tobias, Obsessed by Dress (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 114. John Ruskin was a prominent Victorian artist, author, reformer, and influential art critic who was a socialist and a member of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

slavery to continue in Missouri, but prohibited slavery in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase territory north of latitude 36°30'N.[2]

The Civil War, of course, was wrenching for all Americans; however, the people of Missouri experienced particular difficulties in that there were both Southern sympathizers and Union loyalists living in the state. Missouri never seceded from the Union, and it was able to recover more quickly than the states that had. Missouri did experience great losses due to the Civil War, especially since Missouri men commanded, fought, and died for both sides. Over 109,000 Missouri men were in the Union army and over 30,000 were in the Confederate army. Of those, 14,000 died for the Union; however, figures for the number who died fighting for the Confederacy were not available.[3]

Following the Civil War, life was challenging for Confederate sympathizers. They could not legally vote; therefore, the Republicans governed Missouri immediately after the war. Missouri's former Confederates were mostly Democratic, but could not vote again until 1870 when the Democrats helped elect a Liberal Republican as governor, even though Reconstruction was still going strong in the Southern states. From 1872 until the election of 1908, Democrats were elected governor; and, therefore, they controlled politics in Missouri.

In the years following the Civil War, Missouri experienced a great deal of growth both in terms of overall population and in industrial development. In 1860, Missouri was the eighth most populated state in the Union, but by 1870 Missouri moved up to fifth place where it remained until 1910. As the miles of railroad tracks increased throughout the country, the tracks also steadily extended across Missouri through the end of the nineteenth

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[2] Duane G. Meyer, The Heritage of Missouri, 3rd ed. (St. Louis, MO: River City Publishers, Ltd., 1982), 146-188 and William E. Parrish, Charles T. Jones, Jr., and Lawrence O. Christensen, Missouri; The Heart of the Nation. (St. Louis, MO: Forum Press, 1980), 50-60.

[3] Meyer, 348-404.

century, further aiding the population and industrial growth of the state. In 1870, Missouri had approximately 2,000 miles of railroads; by 1900, that number increased to over 6,800 miles. The railroads aided the growth of the cities through which they passed and provided less costly, faster transportation of products and people. The railroads also brought many men into the cities through which they passed. These men then brought substantial business to the cities in terms of the services they purchased such as food or laundry. The men also obtained services of a less legitimate nature from the red-light districts in those cities.[4]

ST. LOUIS

In 1809, just six years after Missouri became a territory, St. Louis was officially incorporated as a town. The boundaries were officially set and included at least six miles of riverfront property. The new town's location on the waterfront made it conveniently accessible from the upper Midwest as well as the South and aided in the town's growth. Throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century, St. Louis grew and came to be known as the Gateway City, since it was viewed as the natural starting point for the many people migrating west. In the second half of the nineteenth century, rail transportation became supreme. With the growth of the rails and the continued use of riverboats, St. Louis was guaranteed a prominent place in American history. In 1860, St. Louis was the eighth largest city in the country, but it still was known primarily for the distribution rather than the manufacture of goods. However, as St. Louis and other more westerly cities began to require more goods, the cost of shipping items from the East became prohibitive, so enterprising businessmen began to consider St. Louis as an obvious and ideal location for their manufacturing

[4] Meyer, 437-481.

endeavors. St. Louis became a well-known center for the manufacture of a variety of products and food stuffs such as soap, candles, cigars, men's clothes, shoes and boots, as well as flour, refined sugar, and alcohol.[5]

The Civil War naturally slowed St. Louis' population and economic growth. Southern blockades prevented the importation of raw materials from and the exportation of products to the South. Federal regulations also put a halt on trade with cities and towns in the upper Mississippi valley area. St. Louis, like the rest of Missouri, had both Union and Confederate factions that created internal conflicts and the inability to accomplish most political and economic endeavors. Additionally, in August 1861, St. Louis was placed under martial law and remained so until the end of the war. These factors combined to cost St. Louis much in terms of economic development and expansion.[6]

In the 1860s, St. Louis continued to grow as did the conflicts among citizens over slavery. The 1860s were a difficult time for the people of St. Louis, of Missouri, and of the entire nation as a result of the Civil War. The people in St. Louis, as in the whole state, were on both sides of the conflict. In the 1850s, St. Louis had a strong economic connection to Southern river cities such as New Orleans, due to riverboat transport and proximity that allowed for trade.[7] St. Louis however was not completely allied with the South. In the late 1850s and 1860s, the men elected to various political offices, including Mayor John How, State Congressman Frank P. Blair, and State Legislator B. Gratz Brown, all were against slavery for economic reasons. These men worked for Emancipation because they felt the "economic advantages of a free society were" the primary interest for the people of St. Louis

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[5] James Neal Primm, Lion of the Valley; St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980, 3rd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), 96-97, 188-226.
[6] Primm, 227-271.
[7] Primm, 227-271.

and Missouri. Furthermore, they felt "slavery had done nothing for Missouri except to identify it with the backward South, to which the state owed nothing."[8] This implied that the men wanted to reject southern trade because they felt trade with the North was more profitable. Additionally, as the 1860s progressed, St. Louis' trade with the North increased, thereby lessening the city's economic dependence on and connection to the South.[9]

St. Louis began to regain some of its former glory during Reconstruction and the city competed fiercely with Chicago for trade opportunities in the upper Midwest. In 1860, St. Louis had a total population of 160,773. By 1870, St. Louis moved up from eighth to fourth largest city in the United States, surpassing Chicago, with an official population of 310,864. Within that total there were 161,796 men and 149,068 women. The total population results, however, were somewhat controversial. The St. Louis results were not made public until after the results for Chicago were published. Additionally, both cities were in competition with each other for supremacy along the Mississippi River. The press in both cities also publicized the idea that the numbers were artificially inflated. However, the Census Bureau accepted and endorsed the results, thereby legitimizing St. Louis' ranking as the fourth largest city in America. The substantial increase in St. Louis' population also helped boost Missouri's population.[10]

In 1880, St. Louis dropped to sixth place with a total population of 350,518. The result was rather evenly divided between the genders with 179,520 men and 170,998 women. By 1880, both Chicago and Boston surpassed St. Louis, which would never again rank above Chicago in national population standings. In 1890, St. Louis moved ahead of Boston to take

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[8] Primm, 229-230.
[9] Primm, 227-271.
[10] George E. Waring, Jr., Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Part II, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1887), 567; and Primm, 272-274.

the fifth place ranking with a total population of 451,770, with 228,114 men and 223,656 women. By 1900, St. Louis legitimately regained its fourth place position with a total population of 575,238 (Figure 2). However, in 1890 Chicago achieved second place and remained in that position until the 1990 census when it was replaced by Los Angeles.[11]

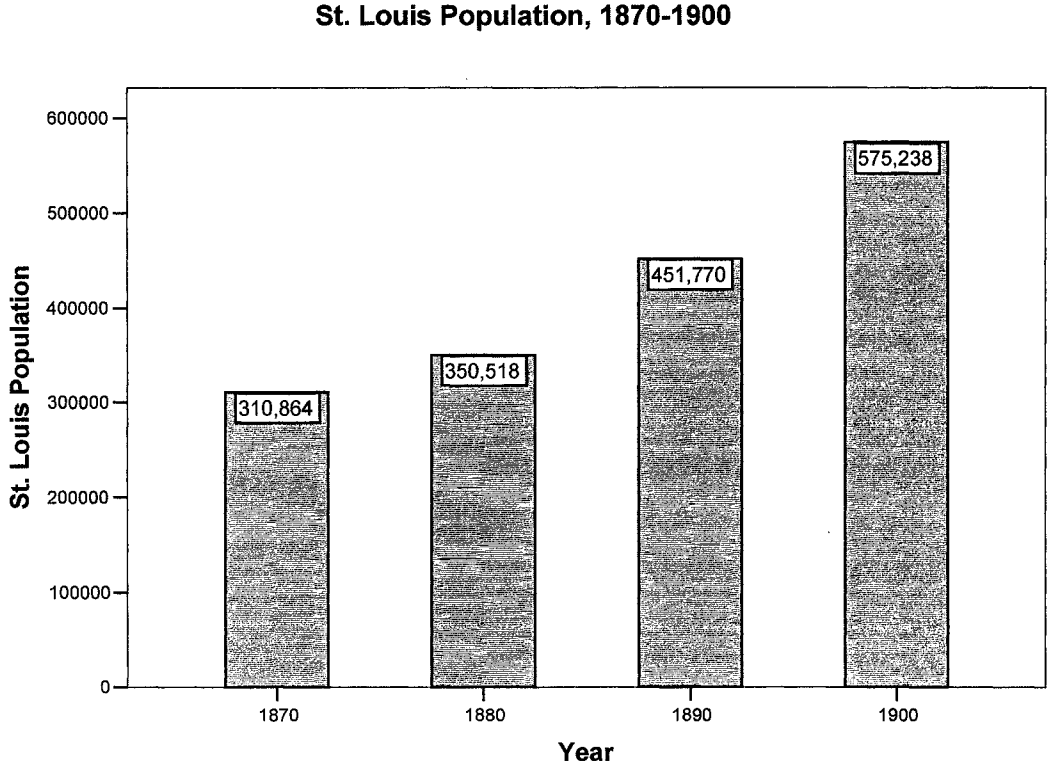

Figure 2 – Population figures for St. Louis from the decennial censuses, 1870-1900.[12]

In the mid-nineteenth century, St. Louis was growing to such an extent that some citizens even began to campaign for the nation's capital to be moved there. They believed that St. Louis' location in the geographic center of the country as well as its growing population and business interests, made it an ideal choice for the national capital. The idea of

[11] Campbell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990," (Washington, DC: U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), U. S. Census Bureau Website, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027.html.
[12] Gibson, U. S. Census Bureau Website, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027.html.

St. Louis becoming the new national capital was originally proposed in 1848, but did not gain even local support until after the Civil War. In 1869, the Merchants Exchange of St. Louis hosted a convention to discuss relocating the nation's capital. Governors and other representatives from at least twenty-one other states came to the convention to discuss the proposal then urged Congress to consider relocating the capital to their more central location. Logan U. Reavis, the committee's secretary, toured the East Coast to promote the idea, but Easterners were simply unwilling to lose the national capital. The idea was finally put to rest after the House of Representatives allocated more funding for several new Federal buildings in Washington. The committee finally accepted that since the Federal government was putting significant money into constructing new buildings in Washington, it certainly would not be likely to relocate to a new and far distant location.[13]

As St. Louis grew, the town's citizens and government had to come up with a way to overcome its biggest drawback as well as asset, the Mississippi River. River traffic was a great boon to St. Louis' growth and business interests, but the river also made travel and transport overland difficult and costly. The solution came in the form of a bridge across the Mississippi River, which was constructed under the direction of James B. Eads beginning in 1868 and completed in 1874. The bridge's construction was slowed by controversy, since the size of the bridge was over 500 feet across and the plan was based on an arch design rather than a suspension or truss design; the two more common bridge construction techniques. The bridge design also limited the available amount of clearance beneath it. Even at the maximum point, there was only fifty feet of clearance, which was not enough for the then-current, triple-decker steamboats. This did not actually cause significant problems

[13] Primm, 272-275.

since the bridge was primarily for trains and with increased railway traffic there was decreased need for triple-decker steamboats. The flat-bed barges that easily traveled beneath the new bridge were rapidly replacing the larger steamboats.[14] The bridge opened officially, to great fanfare on July 4, 1874. Eads Bridge was considered a great triumph for the city, especially since the depression of 1873 was still causing economic difficulties for many cities through 1874 and 1875. Instead, St. Louis enjoyed "a steady progress of business during a year which has brought disaster to every other city."[15] At that time, the bridge was also the only railroad route across the Mississippi River and therefore, any westbound rail traffic in the country had to go through St. Louis. This further increased the amount of transient traffic through St. Louis and, consequently, the potential customer base for the saloons and prostitutes. The bridge was also a lasting monument to the growth and prosperity of St. Louis during the Gilded Age.[16]

As St. Louis was growing and expanding, so too were its railroad enterprises. During the Gilded Age, the miles of railroads through St. Louis were increasing as were the miles across the entire country. Throughout the late nineteenth century, various small railroad companies laid track through St. Louis. Initially, all the tracks led across the Eads Bridge.[17] The railroads also brought a lot of railroad workers who frequently visited the red-light districts in all the cities through which they traveled.[18]

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[14] Primm, 278-291.
[15] David B. Gould, Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875. (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publishers, 1875), 42.
[16] Primm, 278-291 and BridgePros, "Eads Bridge," http://bridgepros.com/projects/eads/index.htm (accessed February, 2005).
[17] Primm, 281-297.
[18] Jennifer Schulle, "The Madams of Denver's Market Street: Their Clothing and Their Lives" (M. A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1996), 12-13.

In 1889, several of the smaller St. Louis railroad companies including the Missouri Pacific, the Louisville and Nashville, and Wabash joined forces to create the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. As the railroad companies were growing in importance and transporting more goods and people, the need for an improved central railroad station grew. In 1891, Dr. William Taussig, an economist, recognized the need for a new Union Station. Taussig had also helped with the Eads Bridge project, so he was accustomed to working on large projects to aid St. Louis' growth and prosperity. Taussig proceeded with the project, and the grand opening of St. Louis' Union Station was held on September 1, 1894.[19]

St. Louis' fashion industry

As St. Louis population was growing in the late nineteenth century, it was also rapidly becoming the commercial and industrial heart of the state. One industry of particular interest that grew was boot and shoe manufacturing. The St. Louis Shoe Factory started in 1869 and was therefore the first. By 1873, the total value of shoes and boots made and sold wholesale by all St. Louis shoe firms exceeded one million dollars. As of 1882, jobbing in the wholesale boot and shoe industry was doing a combined business of ten million dollars annually.[20] Several factories made shoe components then shipped them east to be finished. By 1897, there were twenty-six boot and shoe factories that employed over five-thousand workers and by 1900 the number of employees in the shoe factories exceeded six-thousand.

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[19] Primm, 294-297.

[20] Jobbing meant one part of a company's manufacturing process was contracted out to another firm. From William Dwight Whitney, Ph.D., superintendent of preparation. The Century Dictionary: An Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, Vol. IV. (New York: The Century Co., 1895), 3235.

Annual combined sales in 1900 surpassed thirty-seven million dollars, which is a great deal of business, especially by nineteenth-century standards.[21]

Clothing manufacturing was another important industry in St. Louis during the nineteenth century. St. Louis had a prominent fur pelt market prior to 1860, but between 1860 and 1890 fur trading stagnated in relation to the city's other industries. After 1890, the fur industry increased in importance again, and by 1918 St. Louis was the "Fur City of the World."[22]

The hat and cap industry was another prominent apparel-related business. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, there were several houses that did a minimal volume of business. By 1874, the number of houses declined because some of the smaller houses consolidated into larger and more capable firms able to do a greater volume of business. The houses' combined sales in 1873 exceeded two and a half million dollars.[23]

The more mainstream clothing manufacturing included shirts, jeans, and undergarments, as well as general outerwear. The clothing industry of St. Louis was also rather up-to-date for the time period because the directory of 1870 revealed one jean manufacturer.[24] Levi's jeans did not come onto the scene as working man's wear until 1871-1872.[25] The fact that St. Louis had a jeans manufacturer in 1870 meant that the city was in

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[21] J. A. Dacus and James W. Buel, A Tour of St. Louis (St. Louis, MO: Western Publishing Co., 1878), 181-217, 226-228, and 309; Jno. E. Land, St. Louis; Her Trade, Commerce and Industries, 1882-1883: Manufacturing Advantages, Business and Transportation Facilities Together with Sketches of the Principal Business Houses and Manufacturing Concerns in the 'Mound City;' Historical and Descriptive Review (St. Louis, MO: Jno. E. Land, 1882), 42-60; and L. U. Reavis, St. Louis, The Commercial Metropolis of the Mississippi Valley (St. Louis, MO: Tribune Publishing Co., 1874), 45-50, 78-95, and 109-113.
[22] Eugene Morrow Violette, A History of Missouri (Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfre Press, 1957), 180-181.
[23] Dacus and Buel, 181-217, 226-228, and 309; Land, 42-60; and Reavis, 45-50, 78-95, and 109-113.
[24] Richard Edwards, ed., Edwards' St. Louis Directory for 1870 (St. Louis, MO: Edwards & Co. Publishers, 1870), 1036.
[25] Blanche Payne, Geitel Winakor, and Jane Farrell-Beck, The History of Costume: From Ancient Mesopotamia Through the Twentieth Century, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 522.

keeping with the developments of the time, and by 1877 St. Louis had seven jeans manufacturers.[26]

During 1872, there were a total of 141 dressmakers and 103 milliners in St. Louis (Figure 3). In 1872, there were also 75 clothing retail stores in St. Louis, but the type of clothing that was sold was not stated. In 1870, the total population of St. Louis was 310,864. Of these, 149,068 were women, which was approximately 48% of the total population. The number of women who were dressmakers was .095% of the total number of women in St. Louis. Milliners made up .069% of the total female population. Combined, dressmakers and milliners made up only .16% of the female population.[27]

The 1870 census also stated that there were 15,736 women in St. Louis "engaged in all classes of occupations" within the total female population. Combined, dressmakers and milliners made up only 1.55% of the total women engaged in all occupations in St. Louis. This is slightly less than the proportion of dressmakers and milliners within the population of all working women in Missouri. The 1870 census reported that there were 38,711 women engaged in all occupations in Missouri and of those 1,714 were "milliners, dress and mantua makers." The dressmakers and milliners constituted 4.43% of all working women in Missouri. However, 10.7% of the registered prostitutes were former dressmakers or milliners. The proportion of dressmakers and milliners among the prostitutes was much

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[26] Edwards, 1036; and David B. Gould, Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publishers, 1877), 1146.

[27] David B. Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, (St. Louis, MO: Review Steam Press, 1872), I: 998-1000, 1046-1047; Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of Census, Ninth Census, Volume I: The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations, to which are added The Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Pauperism and Crime, and of Areas, Families, and Dwellings, Compiled, from the Original returns of the Ninth Census, June 1, 1870, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 682-695. The total population figure used is from 1870; a figure that increased to 170,998 by 1880. That averages to an annual increase of just over 2000 women. Therefore, there must have been at least 149,068 women in St. Louis in 1872.

greater than the proportion in the total number of working women and substantially more than in the entire female population.[28]

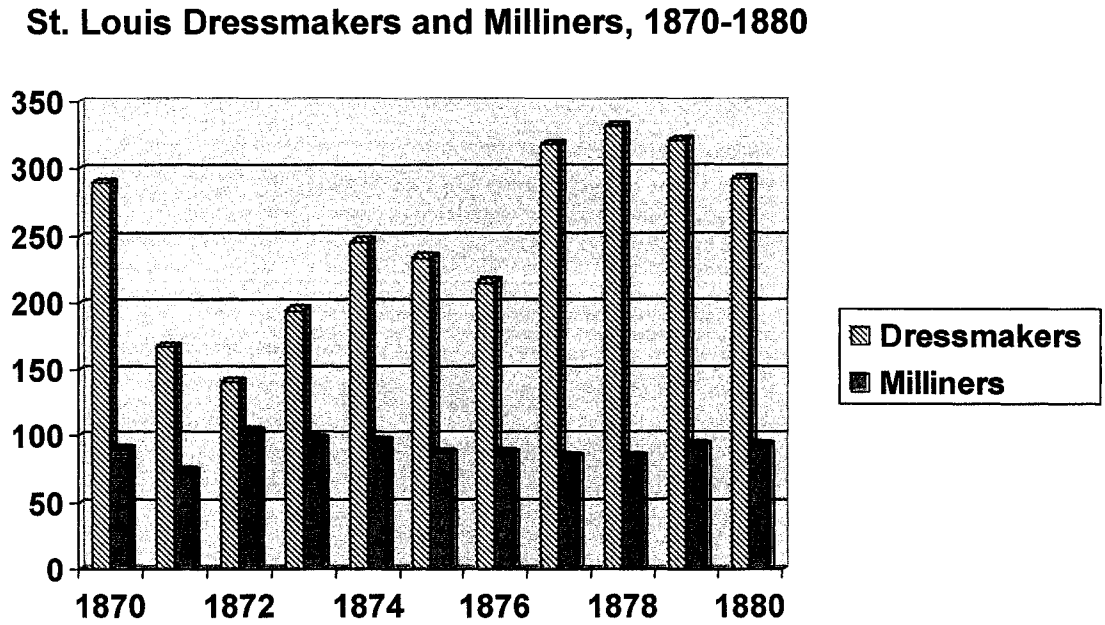

Figure 3 – The number of dressmakers and milliners listed each St. Louis business directory from 1870 to 1880.[29]

The clothing industry was significantly aided by the growth of the railroad system that opened up new markets in the West and South. By 1874, the combined sales of both jobbers and primary manufacturers in the clothing trade were eleven million dollars and of

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[28] Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, I: 998-1000, 1046-1047; Walker, Ninth Census, Volume I, 682-695.

[29] Richard Edwards, ed., Edwards' Twelfth Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1870 (St. Louis, MO: Southern Publishing Co., 1870), 998-999, 1048; Richard Edwards, ed., Edwards' Thirteenth Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1871 (St. Louis, MO: Southern Publishing Co., 1871),754, 795-796; Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, I:998-1000, 1046-1047; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis City Directory for 1873 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould & Co., Publishers, 1873), 998-1000,1046-1047; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1874 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1874), 1058-1060, 1120-1122; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875, 1084-1085, 1150; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1876 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1876), 1076-1077, 1141; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877, 1102-1104, 1166; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1878 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1878), 1072-1074, 1131; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1879 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1879), 1124-1126, 1184; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1880 (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1880), 1202-1204, 1269-1270.

this between two- and two-and-a-half million dollars worth of products were manufactured entirely in St. Louis. This was an even more remarkable amount since the country was in a depression during the mid-1870s. By 1882, there were sixteen companies involved in the wholesale clothing trade and they each did an average business of four million dollars.[30]

In terms of apparel product retail sales, as of 1882 there were approximately 126 clothing and furnishing retailers, 600 shoe and boot stores, and 252 tailors. These companies also did a tremendous amount of business in St. Louis, but were only a portion of the entire retail trade, which also included saloons, of which there were 1112; meat markets, booksellers and stationers, barbers, and drugstores. Combined, the apparel manufacturing and retail trades significantly added to St. Louis' general prosperity and growth.[31]

St. Louis charities and assistance organizations

The nineteenth century was a time of great change in American history, and charities were no exception. The fact that the poor were in need of money and assistance was no longer enough to guarantee that they received help. By the 1870s, the poor had to prove their moral worth so they could actually get the help they needed. The charities in St. Louis were in keeping with the general trends occurring in America. During this period, cities began to refer the needy to the various private organizations within the city. The cities limited their aid to hospitals and homes specifically for citizens who were not always considered worthy of receiving the private aid. St. Louis accomplished this with the Social Evil Hospital and House of Industry as well as with the other city hospitals such as the Quarantine Hospital, for

[30] Dacus and Buel, 181-217, 226-228, and 309; Land, 42-60; and Reavis, 45-50, 78-95, and 109-113.
[31] Dacus and Buel, 181-217, 226-228, and 309; Land, 42-60; and Reavis, 45-50, 78-95, and 109-113.

very sick and contagious patients, and the House of Refuge, a place for youthful delinquents.[32]

The primary aim of the Social Evil Ordinance was to stop the spread of venereal disease, but another goal was to help women who wanted to escape from a life of prostitution. However, no indication was made in the original law specifically listing or suggesting how to help the women. The amended ordinance from 1871 suggested that women be taught needlework or domestic service during their stay in the Social Evil Hospital or House of Industry, but any money they earned went into the city treasury and not into an account set-up for their own use. The women were only allowed to stay in the House or Hospital until they gained respectable employment, but no mention was made of whether any help was offered the women to guarantee they gained employment or earned a decent wage at any job they acquired.

The provision for the Social Evil Hospital and House of Industry was added to the Ordinance in 1871, but these institutions, both located in the same building, were not built until 1873. The delay was due in part to the problem of finding an acceptable location. Apparently, the people of nineteenth-century St. Louis, like people of today, simply did not want a business that served prostitutes near their homes. It seems that the NIMBY syndrome (Not in My Backyard) was alive and well in the nineteenth century.[33] After the Social Evil Ordinance was repealed in 1874, the building was renamed the Female Hospital and was

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[32] S. J. Kleinberg, Women in the United States, 1830-1945 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 185.

[33] Duane R. Sneddeker, "Regulating Vice; Prostitution and the St. Louis Social Evil Ordinance, 1870-1874." Gateway Heritage, 11, 2 (Fall, 1990): 20-47.

promoted as a maternity hospital for women from all levels of society, but most of the women who actually went there were prostitutes or magdalens.[34]

The Social Evil Hospital was not adept at reforming the women, because those who ran the Hospital could not agree on how to help them. The City Council tried inviting preachers to the Hospital, but they had difficulty finding a preacher who would actually come, so there was no regular service. At one point in 1873, Mayor Joseph Brown toured the Hospital and spoke to the women. Brown was elected Mayor in 1871; therefore he inherited the Social Evil Ordinance along with his new office. Prior to being elected Mayor, Brown was actively involved in various St. Louis business enterprises including steamboats that he built and commanded. Later, he was elected president of the Pacific Railroad company just days before he was elected mayor. Brown was known as a "liberal in purse and in views" and was known "to adopt broader grounds in things religious as well as secular."[35] For that reason, he was more likely to favor the ordinance and work toward its success in whatever ways were in keeping with his role as a "practical philanthropist."[36] During the speech, the Mayor simultaneously invited preachers to attend to the patients and condemned them for not coming to the Hospital. A portion of the speech follows:

> I am here this morning rather against my own inclination, not but that I like to come here on most occasions, but I have felt it was the duty of some of those gentlemen who follow the profession of ministers of the gospel that they should come here and speak to you rather than myself... But I regret to say that the ministers of the gospel who visit such places are very few, and their visits are few and far between. . . I find again that He said it was not the righteous, but the sinner, that He came to save. Now I do not mean to say by that that you girls are the only sinners in

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[34] Camille N. Dry, A Pictorial History of St. Louis; The Great Metropolis of the Mississippi Valley, A Topographical Survey Drawn in Perspective, A. D. 1875, (City: Reprint by McGraw-Young Publishing Co., 1997) plate 95.
[35] "Hon. Joseph Brown, Mayor of St. Louis," The Inland Monthly, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1872, pp. 97-100.
[36] "Hon. Joseph Brown, Mayor of St. Louis," The Inland Monthly, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1872, pp. 97-100.

> the world. Very far from it. In my intercourse with the world, I regret to say that sometimes I think the greatest criminals are outside the penitentiary rather than inside of it. I am not here to-day to offer an excuse for crime or wrong doing in any shape; but I am very far, on the other hand, from saying that I believe it is too late for anyone to mend their course.[37]

Later in the speech, he admitted that the ordinance was not perfect, but that it was "the best course that can be devised under the circumstances;" those circumstances being the need to reduce the frequency of venereal disease in St. Louis and the treatment of the women who contributed to the problem. The mayor went on to state that the Ordinance was "worthy of a trial." He then proclaimed the benefits of the law and stated that one of its aims was good since it was supposed to help the women in the hospital. However, the only way they could be helped was with proper guidance and that included some sort of religious instruction. Later, the Mayor specifically mentioned J. A. Burlingham, a Baptist minister, and suggested that he come to the Hospital to preach to the women, but the minister refused, claiming that he was never actually invited. The minister did offer a counterattack in the newspaper and stated:

> I resent and throw back the slander as groundless in fact and dastard in spirit. For the last seven years I have mingled very largely with the Protestant ministry of St. Louis, and claim to know something of their tone and work. There is not one of them, in my opinion, guilty of the crime which Mayor Brown charges upon them all – a want of sympathy with the fallen and an aversion to tender the ministries of mercy and love to the poor and the unfortunate and lost . . . The night is never so dark, the storm never so severe, and the cold never so biting, as to keep me or my brethren when called from going to the hovel of the poor, down into the dens of infamy, into the gilded palaces of vice, to the straw pallet of the filthy and degraded, down into the very cess-pools of corruption and sin, to tell the story of Jesus and his love to the anxious or the dying. I challenge Mayor Brown to cite one instance in which his invitation to a minister of the gospel to visit the public institutions of the

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[37] The Missouri Republican, "Sabbath Labor," December 1, 1873, p. 8.

> city on Sunday or on any other day, and preach or talk to the inmates, has been treated with indifference and heartlessness, or been withheld, except under circumstances of justifying necessity. I do not know but that I might in vain challenge him for the evidence of having ever, in a single instance, invited a minister of the gospel to visit the Social-evil hospital, or any other of the public institutions over which he ex-officio presides, for the purpose of giving religious instruction and hope to the inmates.[38]

The public battle between the Mayor and the Minister continued with several more exchanges in the newspaper, but Burlingham never went to the Social Evil Hospital or any other public institution to preach. He further claimed that the reason for not going was because he disagreed with the Ordinance and did not want to be perceived as endorsing it. The Ordinance, at least in this case, hurt the women more than it helped them. Moreover, perceptions were important with regard to actions as well as appearances. The dispute between the two men only seemed to have gained publicity for them, but never resulted in any assistance for the women. However, at least one prostitute suggested that maybe the local churches should simply allow the prostitutes to come to their services. She wrote:

> Where, in all this great city affords, is there one place, besides the hospital, in which we can hear preached the way and the life? What church is open to us? . . . It is my struggle to keep out of the hospital, and even the hope of hearing good preaching there presents no attractions. If I am worth saving, I'm worth saving now. It is not necessary that I should go to the lowest depths, for then, maybe, I cannot turn, I demand nothing, for of course I have no rights; I merely breathe through sufferance, but I have made a suggestion, scarcely daring to hope it will ever be noticed.
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> Cora Pearl[39]

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[38] The Missouri Republican, "Burlingham's Blast", December 8, 1873, p. 8.
[39] The St. Louis Daily Globe, "The Sunday Growler", December 21, 1873, p. 6.

The dispute was so popular with the public that it even resulted in a poem, "An Un-Social Evil." The poem, in one part, criticized the battle by saying:

> Now this Joe Down –
> Mayor of the town –
> In spite of the old *deevil*;
> Just undertook,
> By "hook or crook"
> To cure the "social evil."
>
> One Burlybane –
> Or some such name –
> But that's not here nor there –
> Took umbrage at
> The mayor's plain chat,
> And 'gan to rave and tear.[40]

The repeal of the Ordinance in 1874 meant only a small number of women were treated at the hospital. The disagreements between the City Council and local ministers meant few, if any; women were ever reformed through religious instruction at the House of Industry. Additionally, there was no implication the City Council ever attempted any type of secular reform.[41]

There were other attempts by St. Louis citizens to help the poor, but there was no record of any concerted effort to specifically help prostitutes except from some of the religious charities. For example, the Convent of the Good Shepherd worked to help poor women and orphans regardless of their background or the nature of their need. The Convent first opened its doors in St. Louis in 1849 and worked throughout the rest of the nineteenth century to reform young women who strayed from their true moral path in life. The sisters taught the young women skills that supposedly helped train them for more appropriate jobs. In the 1870s, the sisters of the Convent housed many orphans as well as women trained as

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[40] The Missouri Republican, "An Un-Social Evil", December 14, 1873, p. 3.
[41] Sneddeker, 20-47.

seamstresses and women who simply listed "magdalen" as their occupation. This last group consisted of reformed prostitutes; however, no record regarding what happened to these women still exists.[42] By the 1890s, the work done by the young women included laundry and "sewing for 'some of the largest shirt manufacturing houses in the city.'"[43] The sisters also allowed the magdalens to remain with and work in the convent as long as the women needed. The work done by the young women and magdalens provided much of the money needed to purchase the food and clothing used in the convent.[44] It is unclear whether the desire for fashion brought the reformed women into prostitution, but it is certain that apparel affected their lives once they were in the convent because sewing and shirt making were the skills taught and the method through which the women were expected to improve their lives.[45]

The people of St. Louis were worried about their poor, and throughout the nineteenth-century private citizens organized various groups to aid the needy. One such benevolent organization was the St. Louis Provident Association, begun in 1861 with the goal to improve "the moral and physical condition of the indigent, and, so far as is compatible with the design, the relief of their necessities." The Association did this by first visiting the people who applied for help and then only giving them the "necessary articles, and only what is immediately necessary and that which is least susceptible of abuse." The Association also only gave the minimum amount of "staple provision(s) necessary to sustain life" such as "cornmeal, flour, and some kind of meat." They also worried about the morals of those they helped by insisting that those receiving assistance not drink alcohol. The Association

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[42] Population census tracts, St. Louis, Missouri, 1870.
[43] Corbett, 143.
[44] Corbett, 143; Population census tracts, St. Louis, Missouri, 1870; and Population census tracts, St. Louis, Missouri, 1880.
[45] Corbett, 143.

apparently did not work to train people to obtain gainful employment nor did it take in people who wanted to reform; it only provided food and insisted on temperance. Insisting on temperance and limiting the amount and type of aid was typical of many such charitable organizations in late nineteenth-century America. There is no evidence that the Provident Association, one of the more prominent charitable organizations in St. Louis, ever helped prostitutes or trained women for any kind of respectable work.[46]

CRIME IN MISSOURI AND ST. LOUIS

Following the Civil War, Missouri had a significant problem with crime as did many southern and western states during Reconstruction and the westward migration. The years immediately after the Civil War were known as the "Reign of Terror"[47] in Missouri. These years were characterized by theft and the development of the Ku Klux Klan. Horse theft was the most common crime, but it was certainly not the only offense. The opportunity for train robbery naturally increased as more miles of railroad tracks were constructed. This was evidenced by Frank and Jesse James, the most famous of the Missouri criminals, who became notorious, first by robbing trains, and then by expanding their criminal activity into other areas. The years of increased crime also led many Missourians to form vigilante groups in an attempt to fight the crime rather than be a victim of it. Most vigilante groups disbanded after a few years and by the late 1870s, Missouri's "Reign of Terror" abated.[48]

The crime rate began to drop in the 1870s, but crime did not end. Accounts of Missouri history do not mention any female criminals, even though they must have existed.

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[46] The Missouri Republican, April 29, 1870, p. 2; Dacus and Buel, 520-526.
[47] Meyer, 506.
[48] Meyer, 506-510.

Dealing with female criminals was hampered by the lack of adequate jail facilities, a consistent problem in Missouri through the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1840s and 1850s, most women sentenced to jail were usually pardoned due to the lack of adequate jail facilities and the fact that many were widows with children. This was despite the fact that many of these women had committed theft or more violent crimes, such as attempted murder. The few women who were not immediately pardoned were kept in solitary confinement to protect them from the male inmates.[49]

In 1859, Governor Robert Stewart made an appeal to the general assembly for a new cellblock for women. By 1861, the Missouri State Penitentiary (MSP) in Jefferson City was complete. The entire second floor of the State Penitentiary was dedicated to the incarceration of female convicts. The floor only held six cells, but each cell could hold up to four convicts for a total of twenty-four inmates. Once there was a cellblock exclusively dedicated to the housing of women, judges were more willing to convict women of the crimes of which they had been accused.[50]

In the first four years of the cellblock's existence, the prison population went from six to twenty-four inmates, the maximum number the penitentiary could adequately hold. That prompted another appeal for a separate jail dedicated exclusively to the housing of female inmates. The MSP warden P. T. Miller suggested that either a new jail be built in Jefferson City with at least fifty cells for women or, alternatively, the women's department of the MSP be moved to St. Louis, since most of the female inmates came from there. Despite the

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[49] Gary. R. Kremer, "Strangers to Domestic Virtues: Nineteenth-Century Women in the Missouri Prison," Missouri Historical Review, 84, 3, 293-310.
[50] Kremer, 293-310.

warden's request, it took ten years before a new women's prison was built. In the meantime, the number of women going to jail continued to increase.[51]

The majority of women who were incarcerated for any length of time in the late nineteenth-century were thieves; however there were also some women in jail for committing "acts of violence against other persons."[52] Other criminal offenses were not stated, but women certainly could have been arrested for crimes such as prostitution. However, they probably were not placed in the Missouri State Penitentiary. The majority of the incarcerated women usually committed their crimes in larger metropolitan areas such as St. Louis, the city of origin for many of the female inmates.[53] St. Louis in the 1850s was a growing and thriving city just coming out of its frontier stage of development; as the century progressed, St. Louis experienced the typical growing pains of any youthful city. Crime and lawlessness were common in St. Louis, but were not significantly worse than in any other growing city of the time.[54]

The river and steamboat traffic increased the number of foreign-born immigrants moving to St. Louis. German and Irish citizens made up the majority of immigrants who came to the city in the late 1840s and 1850s, due in part to the Irish potato famine and the German revolutions of 1848. These two groups, however, did not get along well with each other and this helped usher in a period of violence and lawlessness during the 1850s that was more severe than anything St. Louis experienced during its frontier days. The violence in St. Louis resulted in various riots between the Irish dock workers and German assistant firefighters, or hose men, as they were commonly known. The German hose men were

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[51] Kremer, 293-310.
[52] Kremer, 309.
[53] Kremer, 293-310.
[54] Primm, 164-167.

generally young, with little guidance, and when they were joined by other misguided youths from the docks, they often harassed prostitutes and destroyed property in and around the brothels on Almond and Third streets. The police did little to curb the crime in the areas of downtown and near the levees because offenses done to people and property of the "lower orders" were unofficially sanctioned by the citizens of St. Louis. The police were generally more alarmed with problems affecting the more respectable citizens of St. Louis, since those people paid more in taxes and were politically influential.[55]

The people of St. Louis also had a tradition of violence due to the ever changing population near the river and the rough and rowdy crews on the many steamboats that were constantly coming and going from levees. America during the 1850s was also experiencing a great deal of violence as the country tried to deal with and resolve the problems of slavery, massive immigration, and westward expansion.[56]

In the late nineteenth century, St. Louis continued to experience problems with crime. This was due in part to the large proportion of transient citizens who were passing through St. Louis on their way to the West and the great numbers of rough workers who either labored in the various construction projects or stopped briefly in St. Louis as their steamboats or trains loaded and unloaded cargo. Crime in St. Louis naturally included theft, assaults, and murder, as well as petty crimes such as picking pockets and vagrancy. In St. Louis in the 1870s, vagrancy was illegal and a vagrant was defined as:

> Any male or female person over the ages of fourteen and sixteen (females fourteen and males sixteen) years, who there is reason to believe live idly without proper and diligent effort to procure employment, and without any visible means to maintain themselves, and

[55] Primm, 164-167.
[56] Primm, 164-167.

> without any settled place of abode, and are of vicious character and depraved habits, or who shall be found loitering or rambling about, or wandering abroad and lodging in groceries, tippling houses, beer-houses, outhouses, bawdy-houses, houses of bad repute, sheds, stables, market-houses, lumber yards, or in the open air, or who shall be found trespassing upon the private premises of others, and not give a good account of themselves, or who shall be found begging, or going from door to door begging, or appearing in any street, thoroughfare or other public place begging, or receiving alms.[57]

This implied that some prostitutes, the streetwalkers, could have been defined as vagrants; however, not all vagrants were streetwalkers. The vagrancy law was one of three laws the police used to regulate prostitutes; the other laws were the laws "against public morals and decency" and, of course, the Social Evil Ordinance. Vagrants also included men or women who were gamblers or suspected thieves as well as people who were "engaged in pigeon-dropping."[58] The police used the vagrancy law as a catch-all so they could harass or arrest someone who did not do anything overtly illegal, but who was suspected of something that may have been illegal. Additionally, the law defined female vagrants as:

> Any prostitute, courtezan, bawd or lewd woman, or any female inmate of any bawdy-house, or house of prostitution or assignation, brothel or house of bad repute, who shall be found wandering about the streets in the night time, or frequenting dram-shops or beer-houses, or any female who shall be found employed as a beer carrier, either in the day or night time, or who may be found employed in singing or dancing in any such house or place.[59]

This further regulated the prostitutes' behavior by declaring that the women were not allowed out onto the streets during the night. This implies that women who were out at night and alone were suspect, whereas women who were accompanied by gentleman were above

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[57] Article IV of The Revised Ordinance of the City of St. Louis, Together with the Constitution of the United States, and of the State of Missouri; the Charter of the City; and a digest of the Acts of the General Assembly, Relating to the City (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp and Co., 1871), 496.

[58] Pigeon-dropping was a scam involving illegal gambling or gaming so that the victim was conned out of his or her money by the person or persons conducting the scam.

[59] Article IV, 497.

reproach, and, therefore, were not harassed. A gentleman, as far as the law was concerned, was any man who was not known to the police as a thief, a gambler, or a previously arrested vagrant. Technically and legally, men were innocent until proven guilty.[60]

For the purposes of the law, men who worked with prostitutes were also defined as vagrants in section eight as: "Any procurer, pimp or other male person inhabiting a bawdy-house or house of prostitution or assignation, or in any way connected with the keeping of any such house." This regulated the men who lived in the houses, but it did nothing to condemn the men who visited the houses for recreational purposes. The procurers were vagrants if they lived in the brothels or were "connected" with the running of the house, but this had to be proven and the law did not specify how the connection was legally established. Any man within a brothel could simply claim to have been availing himself of the services of the registered women rather than admitting to a business connection with the house.[61]

The vagrancy law was another way to regulate prostitutes' behavior by requiring they stay off the streets at night. For women who wanted to reform, this further reduced their opportunities for escape from the brothels. The women had a better chance of leaving at night when the madams and the other inmates were otherwise occupied. Additionally, the cover of darkness reduced the likelihood that those trying to escape would have been seen. The vagrancy law made being alone on the streets at night a misdemeanor and the vagrants were fined at least one hundred dollars. If the women's residence was revealed, then they should have been registered as prostitutes according to the Social Evil Ordinance, and escape from prostitution was no longer possible. If the women were not registered and revealed

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[60] Sneddeker, 20-47.
[61] Sneddeker, 20-47.

their residence as a brothel, then they were guilty of disobeying the Ordinance and were then registered.[62]

Another crime that, at first, may not have seemed critical, but revealed a great deal about the sentiments of the citizens of St. Louis was a section of the revised city ordinances listing offences "against public morals and decency." The law, as passed in 1871, stated:

> Any person who shall, in this city, appear in any public place in a state of nudity, or in a dress not belonging to his or her sex, or in an indecent or lewd dress, or shall make an indecent exposure of his or her person, or be guilty of an indecent or lewd act or behavior, or shall exhibit, sell, or offer to sell any indecent or lewd book, picture or other thing, or shall exhibit or perform, or permit to be exhibited or performed, upon premises under his or her management or control, any indecent, immoral or lewd play or other representation, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction thereof, be fined not less than ten or more than three hundred dollars.[63]

According to this law it was unlawful for a person to dress in a manner that was unsuitable for his or her gender. This shows that the citizens of St. Louis, or at least the government, regarded it as necessary for people to dress appropriately for their gender. Even though it was only illegal to dress contrary to one's gender, the government recognized the importance of dressing properly in public and took the law seriously. One case in particular, was that of a young woman who was brought to the Four Courts for dressing like a boy and possibly for suspicion of vagrancy.[64] The young woman was arrested in a rail yard attempting to jump aboard a train to return home. The young woman ran away from home to earn a living in St. Louis where she "secured employment in a clothing establishment or

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[62] Sneddeker, 20-47.
[63] Article II, 489-490.
[64] The Four Courts was actually the name of the building that housed the Court of Criminal Correction, the Criminal Court, and the Police Court; as well as the Police Department, the City Jail, and the morgue. The building was called the Four Courts even though it actually only housed three courts. The Court of Criminal Correction dealt with misdemeanor cases, the Criminal Court dealt with felony cases, and the Police Court dealt with cases involving minor offenses.

factory." However, "her wages were so small she was compelled to seek the humblest quarters, and lived with a poor woman in a squalid part of the city, helping at housework in part payment for her board." Like many young country girls, she became "homesick and downhearted," so she decided to return to her family. When the girl made her decision, she knew that she was safer if she traveled as a young man rather than a girl, so she found some men's clothes and began her journey. She also mistakenly believed that a young man was less likely to be arrested while out on the street alone. She did not have enough money to buy a ticket, so she thought she would try to get home by "stealing rides at night in the cars." She got on a train and fell asleep in one car where she was awakened by a man in a rail yard and brought to the matron of the jail. She was brought to the jail because she was dressed inappropriately and could also have been considered a vagrant since she obviously did not have any resources. Due to the fact that she did not have any money, she was not officially charged with a crime, but her parents were contacted and she was sent home. The girl did not become a prostitute like many other poor country girls, but she was simply not able to survive on her meager wages. Fortunately, this girl's story did not end tragically, but Mrs. Louisa Harris, the police matron who worked on and reported the case, cautioned that many other young country girls who came to St. Louis were not so lucky.[65]

Mrs. Harris became police matron in 1884 as a result of actions taken by the WCTU to establish the office of police matron in the Four Courts of St. Louis in order to help women brought into the prisons. This was yet another action of reform carried out by the WCTU to improve society. Harris cautioned that many girls came to St. Louis only to

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[65] Mrs. Louisa Harris, Behind the Scenes; Or Nine Years at the Four Courts of St. Louis (St. Louis, MO: A. R. Fleming and Co., Book and Job Printers, 1893), 13-15, 46-48.

become "discouraged and disappointed in the city" and when that happened the girls were "in a pitiable condition" and were "more susceptible to the temptation of evil, and the seductive influences of the evil." Mrs. Harris finally warned, "Girls, stay at home!" Mrs. Harris worked as police matron for nine years and finally published an account of her experiences. She personally encountered women who were arrested and naturally worked to discover why the women had erred. However, since she was the matron as a result of actions of the WCTU she naturally implied that alcohol or "intemperance" was the cause behind many of the women's actions. She also stated that "ill-breeding" and "misplaced confidence" accounted for many other reasons why women wound up in the Four Courts. She was a bit biased because, when she related the story of the young woman dressed as a boy at the rail yard, she stated that the girl was poorly paid, but Harris did not assign poverty as a reason why many women wound up in prison. Even though she may have been unduly influenced by the teachings of the WCTU, she did recognize that women were tempted by the evils of the city; and when they were financially strapped they were more susceptible to the perceived benefits of a life of vice including money, food, and a fashionable lifestyle.[66]

The Social Evil Ordinance

Streetwalkers and brothel prostitution were common in most nineteenth-century cities. St. Louis, like any growing city of the time, had a problem with prostitution due in part to the constantly changing or transient male population from the railroads and river traffic that were going to and through the city. However, the men who visited the brothels, saloons, and gambling dens came from all socioeconomic levels and classes in St. Louis, not

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[66] Harris, 13-15, 46-48.

just from the ranks of men who worked for the railroads and riverboats or barges. For this reason, the local city government became worried about the health and well-being of its male citizens and sought a way to stop, or at least slow, the spread of venereal diseases. For that reason, the St. Louis City government passed a controversial ordinance that came to be known as the Social Evil Ordinance (Appendix). The original Ordinance was passed on July 9, 1870 with sixteen in favor and five against. The Ordinance required the registration of all prostitutes and courtesans within the city as well as of all women working in bawdy houses, houses of assignation, and "rooms." The latter was meant to include any mistresses or streetwalkers, since they were not regular residents of brothels and often met their customers on the street or in other public locations and then conducted their business in a neutral location. The streetwalkers in St. Louis were prostitutes, but they were typically part-time prostitutes, whereas the residents of brothels and other houses were full-time prostitutes. This meant that many streetwalkers could have been arrested as vagrants, since they did not necessarily have a permanent residence or regular occupation.[67]

The emphasis of the Social Evil Ordinance was the registration and regulation of the women by the Board of Health to slow the spread of venereal disease in the population. The ordinance itself was also quite controversial because St. Louis citizens felt the ordinance cast a dark shadow over the otherwise bright future to which they had been aspiring. This was especially true since just the previous year St. Louis promoters tried to have the nation's capital moved to their city. The law also was unfavorably viewed because it had an unintended result; the prostitutes were more evident on the streets since they felt the law somehow legitimized their profession. In fact, in the Report of the Chief of Police for the

[67] Corbett, 124-129; Social Evil Ordinance.

fiscal year ending 1872, he listed some of the law's results including that the women were "more decorous in their manner in public." The Chief also stated that the law effectively reduced the number of prostitutes.[68] Additionally, there was record of a Mardi-Gras Ball on February 18, 1874 that was attended by politicians, socialites, prostitutes, and even the Chief of Police. Evidently, one couple included a member of the "first class *demi monde*" and her escort who were dressed as Martha and George Washington. There were "quite a number of men of respectability and position present there as lookers on, and in some cases commingling with them."[69] The prostitutes and madams felt the public's perception of their work, and consequently of them, had improved; therefore, the women were more willing to go out and about in town. However, the prostitutes' increased visibility only added to the objections to the Social Evil Ordinance as evidenced by the Lieutenant Governor's speech presented to the Missouri State Senate. He read about the party that occurred the night before and then proceeded to speak out in support of the repeal of the Ordinance.[70]

The Ordinance only lasted four years, so it is difficult to state whether it was actually effective in limiting venereal disease. The annual reports from the Board of Police Commissioners showed that the law effectively reduced the number of prostitutes in St. Louis and the Board of Health reported that the frequency of venereal diseases decreased. These were the general opinions during the first two years of its operation, but attitudes began to change in 1873. As the trends seemed to show, the law was not as effective as the

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[68] James McDonough, "Chief's Report" in Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of St. Louis, to the Honorable City Council for the year ending March 31, 1872, (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times Co., Book and Job Printers, 1872), 97.

[69] Charles P. Johnson, "Speech of Lieutenant Governor Charles P. Johnson, on the Bill to Abolish the So-Called Social Evil Law of the City of St. Louis, Delivered in the Senate of Missouri, Thursday, February 19, 1874" (St. Louis, MO: Regan and Carter, Printers and Binders, 1874), 15.

[70] Johnson, whole speech; and Sneddeker, 29.

Boards originally thought. The actual crime statistics from St. Louis showed that the total number of people arrested decreased during the late 1870s with a matching decrease in the number of men arrested (Figure 4). The crime rates show two distinct peaks in the mid-1870s and the mid-1890s with a marked drop in the early 1880s until about 1882. These peaks also correspond precisely with the two major economic downturns of the late nineteenth century. America experienced various financial problems throughout the nineteenth century with a depression between 1873 and 1877. In 1893, the American stock market crashed and resulted in another depression that was the most severe during the Gilded Age. The depression lasted until 1897 and caused the failure of over 500 banks, over 15,000 businesses, and 74 railroads.[71] The dates of the depressions also match the dates of the peaks in the crime rates, which suggest a connection between poverty and crime.[72] Overall, the graph shows that crime rates in 1900 were greater than in 1870, but the increase was gradual and not constant. There were downward trends in the early 1880s and from 1898 through the end of the graph. The overall increase in the crime rate was normal, since the population

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[71] The History Channel website, "History of the World Timeline, 1893," http://www.historychannel.com (accessed March, 2005).

[72] "Ninth Annual Police Commissioner's Report" in The Mayor's Message, with Accompanying Documents, to the City Council of the City of St. Louis, at its May Session, 1870 (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp & Co., Printers and Binders, 1870), 246-253; "Tenth Annual Police Commissioner's Report" in The Mayor's Report for 1871 (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., 1871), 327-328; "Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for the Year Ending March 31, 1872 (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., Book and Job Printers, 1872), 56-63, 92-108; "Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Message, with Accompanying Documents, to the City Council of the City of St. Louis at its May Session (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., City Printers, 1873), 67-86; "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Message, with Accompanying Documents, to the City Council of the City of St. Louis at its May Session (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., City Printers, 1874), 7-13, 44-52; Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of St. Louis, to the Honorable the City Council, for the Fiscal Year Ending April 13, 1875 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher listed, 1875), 85-95; "Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1876 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher listed, 1876), 58-61; "Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1877 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher listed, 1877), 29-33; "Seventeenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1878 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher listed, 1878), 53-57; "Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1879 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher listed, 1879), 9-12.

grew as well. However, the crime rate did not increase to the same extent as the population as shown by the graph in Figure 5.

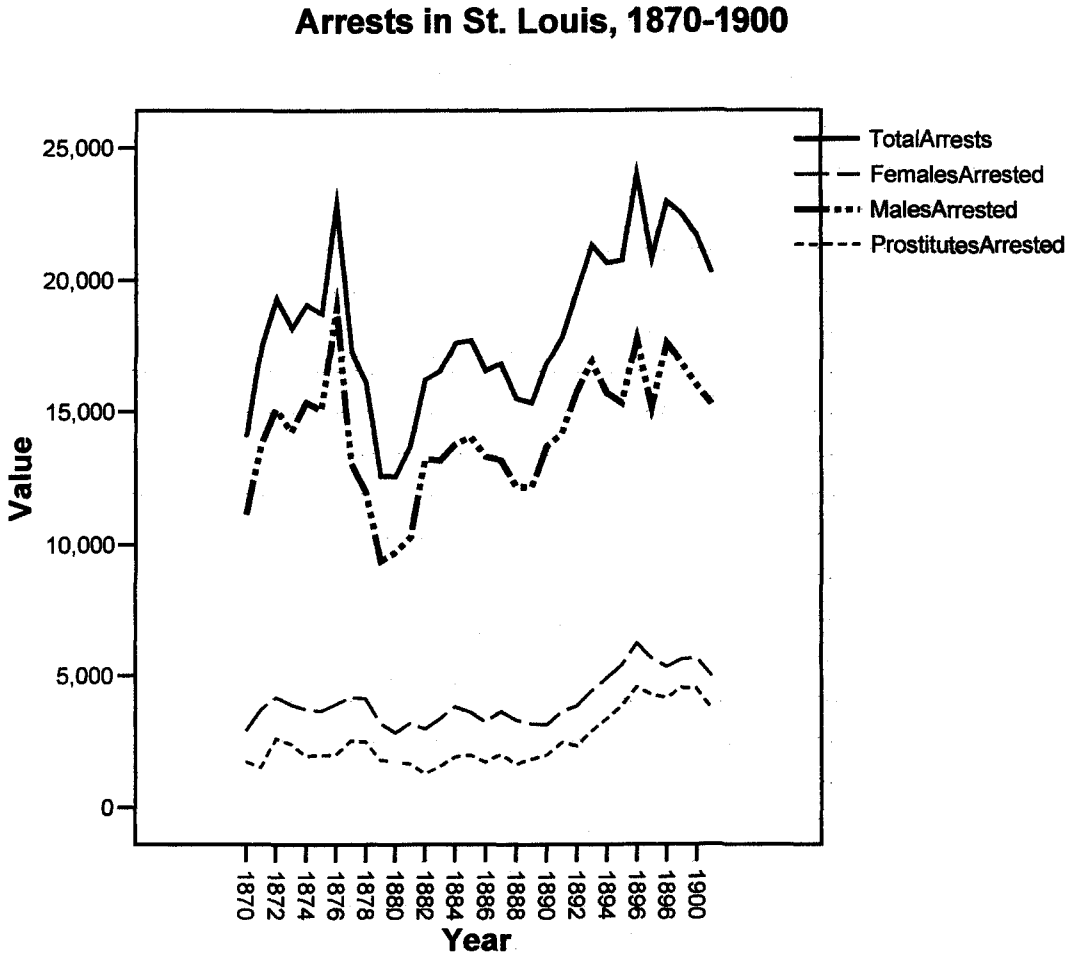

Figure 4 – Data taken from Annual Reports of the Board of Police Commissioners. The years represent fiscal rather than calendar years.[73]

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[73] "9th Annual Police Commissioner's Report" in The Mayor's Message, with Accompanying Documents, to the City Council of the City of St. Louis, at its May Session, 1870 (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp & Co., Printers and Binders, 1870), 246-253; "10th Annual Police Commissioner's Report" in The Mayor's Report for May (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., 1871), 327-328; "11th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1872 (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., City Printers, 1872), 56-63, 92-108; "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1873 (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., City Printers, 1873), 67-86; "13th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Message, with Accompanying Documents, to the City Council of the City of St. Louis at its May Session (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Times, Co., City Printers, 1874), 7-13, 44-52; "14th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1875 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1875), 85-95; "15th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1876 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1876), 58-61; "16th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1877 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1877), 29-33; "17th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1878 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1878), 53-57; "18th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1879 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1879), 9-12;

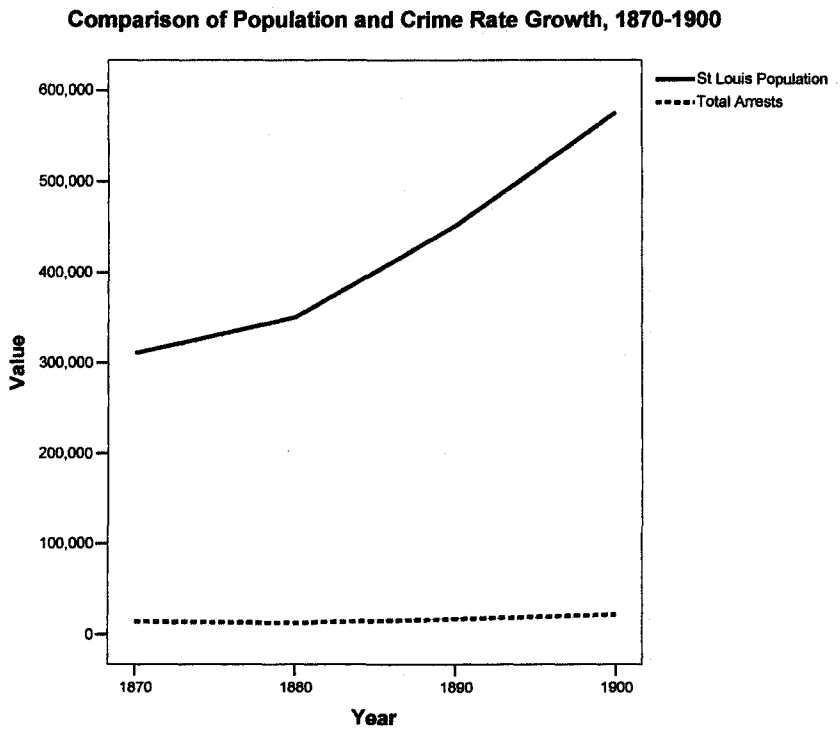

Figure 5 – The relative increases in St. Louis' population and total arrests, 1870 to 1900.[74]

"19th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1880 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1880), 480-482; "20th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1881 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1881), 502-506; "21st Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1882 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1882), 471-475; "22nd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1883 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1883), 440-444; "23rd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1884 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1884), 496-500; "24th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1885 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1885), 36-41; "25th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1886 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1886), 506-512; "26th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1887 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1887), 42-52; "27th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1888 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1888), 30-36; "28th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1889 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1889), 31-37; "29th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1890 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1890), 22-26; "30th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1891 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1891), 418-422; "31st Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1892 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1892), 499-503; "32nd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1893 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1893), 533-538; "33rd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1894 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1894), 562-567; "34th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1895 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1895), 617-622; "35th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1896 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1896), 670-675; "36th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1897 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1897), 724-731; "37th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1898 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1898), 771-780; "38th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1899 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1899), 827-833; "39th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners" in The Mayor's Report for 1900 (St. Louis, MO: No publisher, 1900),894-900.

[74] "9th Annual Police Commissioner's Report," 246-253; "10th Annual Police Commissioner's Report," 327-328; "11th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 56-63, 92-108; "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 67-86; "13th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 7-13, 44-52; "14th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 85-95; "15th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 58-61; "16th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 29-33; "17th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners,"

The number of women arrested who claimed to have been prostitutes also decreased more during the late 1870s than during the years of the Social Evil Ordinance, so the ordinance did not actually reduce the number of prostitutes in St. Louis. The total number of women arrested also was naturally more than the number of women who admitted to being prostitutes, but the two lines both seem to follow the same general path over the years (Figure 6). Additionally, the prostitutes arrested were not necessarily arrested for prostitution; this was simply the occupation they claimed at the time of their arrest for any crime. The number of prostitutes arrested also peaked in the late 1870s and the mid-1890s which corresponds to the depressions America experienced in the nineteenth century. It was also recognized by people such as William Sanger and his associates that during times when the economy went down, the number of prostitutes went up.[75]

53-57; "18th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 9-12; "19th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 480-482; "20th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 502-506; "21st Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 471-475; "22nd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 440-444; "23rd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 496-500; "24th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 36-41; "25th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 506-512; "26th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 42-52; "27th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 30-36; "28th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 31-37; "29th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 22-26; "30th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 418-422; "31st Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 499-503; "32nd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 533-538; "33rd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 562-567; "34th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 617-622; "35th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 670-675; "36th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 724-731; "37th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 771-780; "38th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 827-833; "39th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 894-900.

[75] William W. Sanger, M. D. The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World (New York: The Medical Publishing Co., 1919), 679. This information was from the Appendix, which was written in 1895 by an unnamed associate of Dr. Sanger, since William Sanger died in 1872.

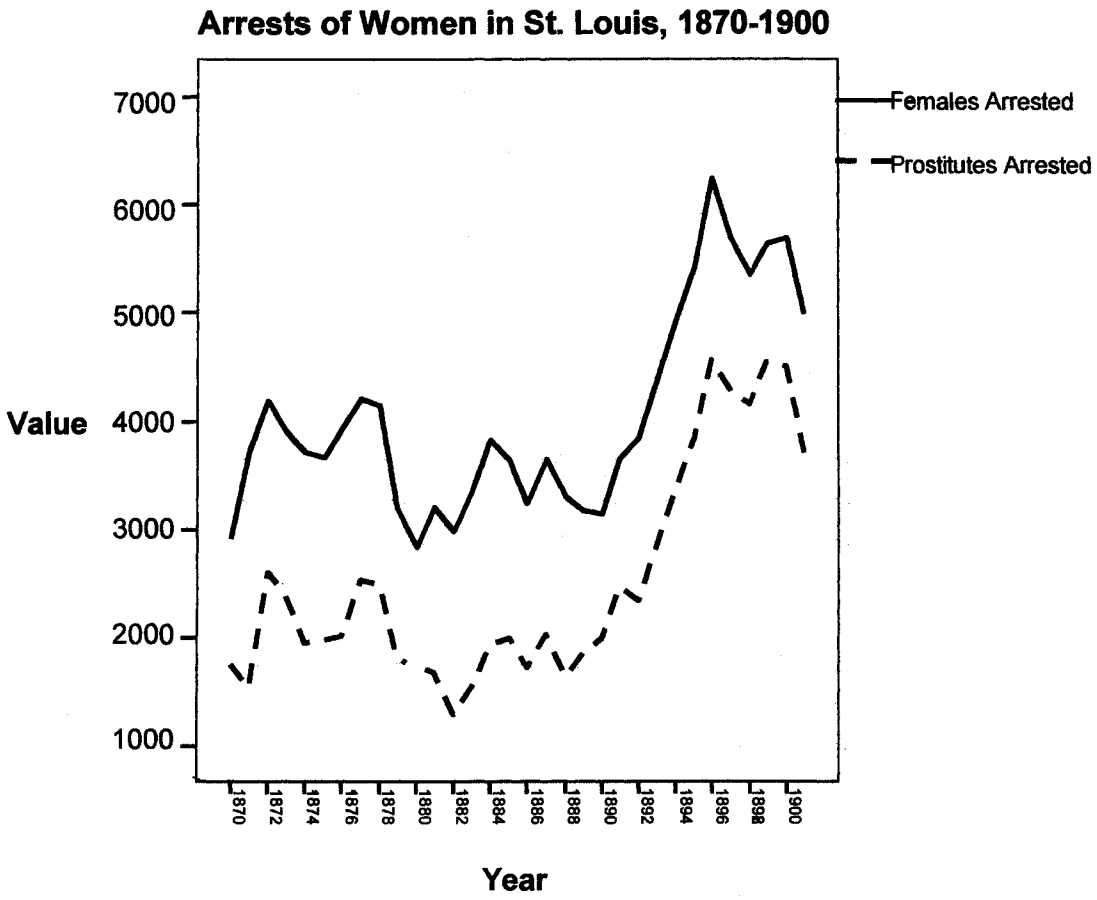

Figure 6 – The total number of arrests for all women and women who claimed prostitution as their occupation from 1870 to 1900. The prostitutes arrested were not necessarily arrested for prostitution, but simply claimed that as their occupation.[76]

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[76] "9th Annual Police Commissioner's Report," 246-253; "10th Annual Police Commissioner's Report," 327-328; "11th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 56-63, 92-108; "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 67-86; "13th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 7-13, 44-52; "14th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 85-95; "15th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 58-61; "16th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 29-33; "17th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 53-57; "18th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 9-12; "19th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 480-482; "20th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 502-506; "21st Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 471-475; "22nd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 440-444; "23rd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 496-500; "24th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 36-41; "25th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 506-512; "26th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 42-52; "27th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 30-36; "28th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 31-37; "29th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 22-26; "30th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 418-422; "31st Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 499-503; "32nd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 533-538; "33rd Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 562-567; "34th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 617-622; "35th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 670-675; "36th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 724-731; "37th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 771-780; "38th Annual

During the time of the Social Evil Ordinance, 1870-1874, police officers were required to ask the women's former occupation when they registered. For the 1872-1873 fiscal year, there were 766 registered prostitutes. Of those, 82 women stated that dressmaker or milliner was their "former condition" and 30 stated that they were former "teachers, clerks, and saleswomen." Combined, this was only 14.62% of the total women registered, but it still shows that some women sold textile or apparel items or worked in the apparel industry prior to registering. It also reveals that women who worked as dressmakers or milliners were not automatically destined to become public women as was believed by people during the Gilded Age.[77]

The total number of registered prostitutes consisted of the women who were officially known to the police as prostitutes. However, more women may have been prostitutes or streetwalkers than were registered. For the purpose of this study, prostitutes were women who sold themselves for sex on a full-time basis and streetwalkers were part-time prostitutes who sold themselves simply to supplement the income they received at another, legal job. The plurality of women, 282, listed "none" as their former condition. The second most common previous occupation was "servants" with 258 women listing that. This is understandable, since women working as servants were vulnerable to sexual assault or to having their reputations ruined by the men in the house. Domestic servants also were near

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Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 827-833; "39th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 894-900.

[77] "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," p. 84; and Wendy Gamber, The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930 (Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1997), 18-19, 70-75.

the bottom of the wage-earning women's social hierarchy; therefore, it was not as difficult for these women to take the final step off the social ladder and into the gutter.[78]

When registering, women were also asked why they embraced prostitution. While most women, 499, affirmed they took up the profession by choice, a large number of women, 138, stated "poverty" was their reason. Precipitating reasons, such as poverty, also included economic pressures induced by low paying jobs, persuasion by another prostitute or a pimp, or a love affair gone wrong.[79] The women who claimed to have freely chosen prostitution may have done so because they did not feel they had any other choice but to become prostitutes. Many of the women who became prostitutes were not from the most privileged classes of society, so it would not have been as difficult to choose to sell themselves rather than barely survive with a poor paying job in a factory or a shop. These women may have chosen to become prostitutes before they had to experience the harsh reality of starvation.[80]

As of March 31, 1873, there were 2,685 prostitutes who had registered since the law was enacted on July 12, 1870. Of those, 233 women stated that seamstress or milliner was their former occupation whereas 63 said that they were former clerks, saleswomen, or teachers. While these figures combined only make up about 11% of the total women registered, it still shows the fashion industry adversely affected some of the women who worked in it. Eight-hundred twenty-one women claimed they had been servants prior to

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[78] "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 1873, p. 84; and Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 135-137.

[79] "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 1873, p. 84.

[80] Jane Addams, A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 17-94; Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 104; Long, 32-49; and "9th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 1870; "10th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 1871; "11th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 1872; and "12th Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners," 1873.

registering as prostitutes, which was just over 30% of the women registered. Over half of the women, 1,384, listed "no occupation" as their former career.[81]

The nativity of the registered prostitutes was included in a report by Dr. William Barrett, a health officer with the city. The majority of the registered prostitutes were from America. There were 1,904 white and 326 "colored" women for a total of 2,230 women, 83.05%, who were born in the United States. The next largest number, 150 or 5.59%, were from Germany followed by 133, 4.95%, from Ireland. These numbers were not unusual for St. Louis, since there were large German and Irish immigrant populations living there during the 1870s.[82]

The socio-economic backgrounds of the women who became prostitutes were not explicitly stated, however most women who became prostitutes were under the age of twenty-five and single. The women also were not necessarily from the poorest families; they may have been from the middle-class of society or from the wage-earning class of workers. Furthermore, some of the women who became prostitutes were left to their own devices following the death of their fathers, brothers, or husbands, and then had no one to support them. The women who became prostitutes had various backgrounds.[83]

The previous and following figures are all from the report produced by Dr. William Barrett; however, when he reported the data for women's reasons for becoming prostitutes, he included an anomaly. He showed that 2,288 women became prostitutes by choice, which corresponds with the above quoted figures from the police report for the 1872-1873 fiscal

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[81] William L. Barrett, M. D., "Prostitution, in its Relation to the Public Health," (St. Louis, MO: Pamphlet to the Board of Health, May 29, 1873), 8-11.
[82] Barrett, 8-11; and Primm, 272-314.
[83] Barbara Meil Hobson, Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition (New York: Basic Books, Ind., Publishers, 1987), 85-94.

year, but he only showed 23 women who became prostitutes due to "poverty." There is simply no logical reason why this figure could be less than the figure for the 1872-1873 fiscal year because these values extend from the beginning of the law in 1870 to March 1873, so they should have included the 1872-1873 fiscal year values as well. He also showed that 254 women became prostitutes out of "necessity" and that 26 did so "for support." Both of these reasons imply an economic motive, but they were listed separate from "poverty." All three reasons also constituted precipitating reasons for becoming prostitutes.[84]

As stated previously, the women who stated choice may have chosen prostitution for a variety of reasons that were simply too complicated to easily convey through a police report or medical survey. The reasons for the discrepancies in the figures are not clearly explained by either the Police or the Board of Health. However, the discrepancies were recognized during the time of the Ordinance. William G. Eliot reviewed the data in 1873 and discovered that the data were indeed questionable. He declared that as of March 31, 1871, the Police reports stated that 1,526 prostitutes were arrested, but that the Board of Health report for the same period showed that there were only 480 registered prostitutes in St. Louis. Eliot, a prominent St. Louis citizen, was against the Ordinance, and he was motivated to show the Ordinance was not effective in registering the actual number of prostitutes in St. Louis.[85]

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[84] Barrett, 8-11.

[85] William G. Eliot, "A Practical Discussion of the Great Social Question of the Day." A Pamphlet produced for the St. Louis Globe, 1873, 4-5; Corbett, 124-129; and Sneddeker, 20-47. The secondary sources reflect this discrepancy, but do not state why the discrepancy exists; they simply show that it was there. I have not found any primary evidence to accurately explain the true reason or reasons for the discrepancy. It was in the interest of Board of Health to show a decline in prostitution, but favorable for the police to show more arrests so the numbers may have reflected the interests of those doing the reporting.

The Annual Police Commissioner's Report for the same period listed 1,284 registered prostitutes. The report also showed that 3,722 women were arrested in that fiscal year and of those 1,526 claimed prostitution as their occupation. However, these women may not have been arrested for prostitution; they simply claimed that as their occupation at the time of their arrest. The women also could have been arrested multiple times for various offenses, so the numbers do not necessarily mean that there were actually 1,526 prostitutes in St. Louis that year even though that was what Eliot was claiming. That number simply showed that, out of the total number of arrests made that year, over 1,500 of the women worked as prostitutes.[86]

The discrepancies are obvious and also revealed that the numbers reported and used for interpretation depended upon the interests of the interpreter. No matter which police statistic was used, there were still many women who were unregistered and who were working as "clandestine prostitutes." Therefore, even though the official statistics from the Board of Health implied that the number of registered prostitutes decreased, the total number of prostitutes in St. Louis had not necessarily declined. Moreover, the number of "clandestine prostitutes" probably increased along with the total female population of the city.[87]

Clandestine prostitution also existed in New York in the 1890s when it was reported that, as the public houses were closed or regulated, the number of "clandestine prostitutes" increased. Therefore, the official numbers showed a decrease which satisfied the public, but the actual number of prostitutes was constant and might even have increased. The only difference was that the prostitutes were more secretive than before, hence the term

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[86] "10th Annual Police Commissioner's Report," 1871, 327.
[87] Eliot, 4-5.

"clandestine."[88] For clandestine prostitution to succeed, the women had to be visually indistinguishable from the genteel women who also may have been frequenting the hotels, boarding houses, or dressmaker establishments the clandestine prostitutes used. There is no record specifying exactly how these women dressed, although in New York it was believed that even "the most scrutinizing hotel clerk, who is generally a good judge of human nature, will admit that he has often been deceived" by couples who were "well dressed and of proper deportment."[89]

The aim of the Ordinance also was to decrease the number of cases of venereal disease, but the statistics presented by the various doctors and reports of the time contradict each other as to whether this actually occurred. While the Ordinance was in effect, Dr. Kennard reported that the number of cases decreased, but he was a member of the Board of Health, with a vested interest in the success of the Ordinance. The same may be said of Dr. William Barrett, who reported a similar decrease in the number of venereal disease cases while the Ordinance was in effect. After the Ordinance was repealed, however, the numbers seemed to show that the incidence of cases was fairly constant.[90]

In 1912, when New York's Committee of Fifteen examined the St. Louis law for guidance, they declared that it was "the most absurdly imperfect experiment upon which arguments were ever based." The committee also declared that it was "claimed by some that venereal disease diminished; by others, that it increased; neither claim being supported by facts worth anything. For all any one knows, disease may have decreased or it may have

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[88] Sanger, 676-678. This information was from the Appendix which was written in 1895 by an unnamed associate of Dr. Sanger since William Sanger died in 1872.
[89] Sanger, 685. This information was from the Appendix which was written in 1895 by an unnamed associate of Dr. Sanger since William Sanger died in 1872.
[90] Thomas Kennard, "Prostitution: Its Causes – Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Relations – Its Irrepressible Nature, and our Right and Duty to Control It," The Medical Archives, Vol. 7, No. 6, 705-719; Barrett, 8-11.

increased. Whatever the change in morbidity, such regulations can hardly be credited with it."[91] According to the report, the statistics published at the time could have shown whatever the officials wanted depending upon how the numbers were interpreted and by whom.

Overall, the Social Evil Ordinance was deemed too great a blight on the moral character of St. Louis and, by extension, the state of Missouri. During the Gilded Age, the citizens of Missouri were interested in reform for the betterment of all citizens, but the Social Evil Ordinance did not seem to aid the citizens as much as it embarrassed them. The State Government decreed that the Ordinance contradicted state laws against prostitution, and it was officially nullified in 1874. However, the nullification of the Social Evil Ordinance did not lessen the problem of prostitution in St. Louis (Figure 7).

[91] The Committee of Fifteen, The Social Evil: With Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 109.

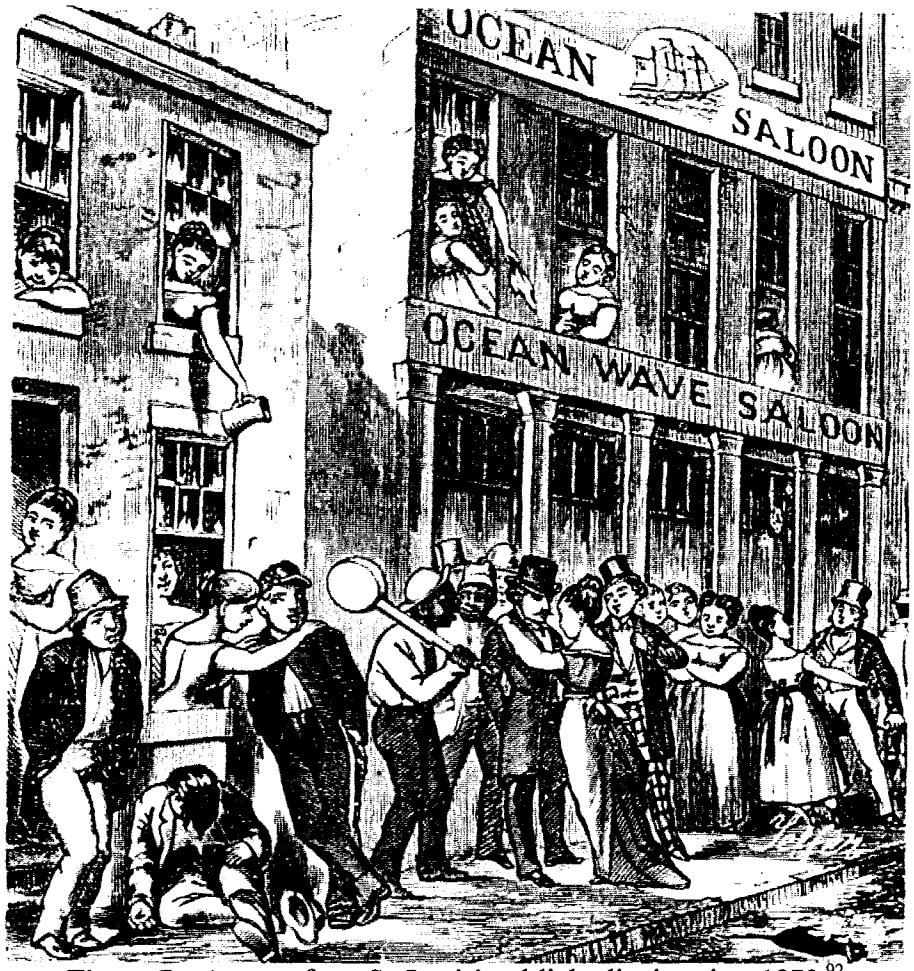

Figure 7 – A scene from St. Louis' red-light district, circa 1878.[92]

The image (Figure 7) shows that St. Louis still had openly immoral elements following the nullification of the Social Evil Ordinance. The women in the image are dressed in a somewhat revealing manner. The woman on the street on the far right is wearing a dress that shows her ankles; a socially unacceptable act in the 1870s. All the women appear to be wearing dresses that had little or no sleeves with necklines that revealed their necks and shoulders. The dresses resemble evening attire, but such attire was only worn indoors by genteel women, and far from the leering eyes of lower class, poor men. During

[92] Dacus and Buel, 444.

the 1870s, the traditional fashion for daytime wear included floor-length dresses with long sleeves and high necklines that nearly touched the chin. The woman on the street in the center of the image appears to be wearing a bustle which was the typical fashion of the day, but her dress is still more revealing than would have been expected as a daytime dress for a genteel woman. All the women in the image are clearly not dressed in a typical manner for genteel women of the period. The men in the image appear to be from various socioeconomic levels and all are wearing apparel that was typical for men of the 1870s.[93]

The number of saloons operating in St. Louis was also substantial during the 1870s (Figure 8). The number of saloons ranged from 839 in 1872 to 1,157 in 1874. The depression of 1873, the opening of the Eads Bridge, and the resultant increase in railroad and river traffic all contributed to why there were more saloons in St. Louis in 1874 than in any other year during the 1870s. It is also interesting that there were fewer saloons operating in St. Louis during the first three years of the Social Evil Ordinance than during the rest of the 1870s.[94] Saloons also functioned as working men's clubs; and there was a substantial number of working men living in and traveling through St. Louis in the 1870s.[95] There also were a few saloons that were owned by women, but the numbers were quite small. There were only between 22 (1870 and 1872) and 44 (1880) saloons operated by women from 1870

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[93] Dacus and Buel, 440-448.

[94] Edwards, ed., Edwards' 12th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1870, 1073-1080; Edwards, ed., Edwards' 13th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1871, 814-820; Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, I:926-935; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis City Directory for 1873, 1078-1084; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1874, 1156-1164; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875, 1181-1188; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1876, 1176-1184; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877, 1200-1207; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1878, 1163-1170; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1879, 1217-1224; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1880, 1305-1312.

[95] Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 16-18.

to 1880.[96] The saloons alone did not cause the immorality of St. Louis, but they certainly contributed to the problem.

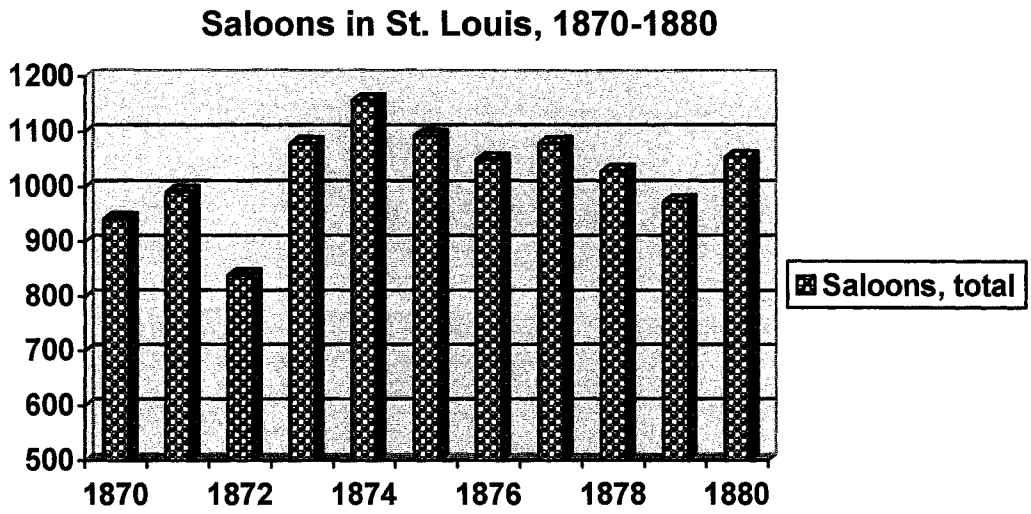

Figure 8 – The total number of saloons operating in St. Louis from 1870 to 1880 as revealed in the annual city directories.[97]

Further evidence of St. Louis' immorality was published in 1889. In that year, the Commissioner of Labor published an annual report on the condition of working women in twenty-two large cities. The information for the report was collected by women who visited the cities and interviewed over 17,000 working women living in those cities. The report included St. Louis and provided information on the general conditions of the areas in which

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[96] Edwards, ed., Edwards' 12th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1870, 1073-1080; Edwards, ed., Edwards' 13th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1871, 814-820; Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, I:926-935; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis City Directory for 1873, 1078-1084; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1874, 1156-1164; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875, 1181-1188; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1876, 1176-1184; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877, 1200-1207; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1878, 1163-1170; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1879, 1217-1224; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1880, 1305-1312.

[97] Edwards, ed., Edwards' 12th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1870, 1073-1080; Edwards, ed., Edwards' 13th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1871, 814-820; Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, I:926-935; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis City Directory for 1873, 1078-1084; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1874, 1156-1164; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875, 1181-1188; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1876, 1176-1184; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877, 1200-1207; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1878, 1163-1170; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1879, 1217-1224; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1880, 1305-1312.

the women lived and worked as well as the places and organizations set-up within each city to aid wage-earning women. For St. Louis, the report stated that there was "work in abundance for all women who want it" and that "the manufacture of clothing is largely carried on in Saint Louis, and some of the worst establishments visited during the entire investigation were found among the 'tailor's back shops.'"[98] The report went on to say that "the moral conditions are generally of a lower standard than is found in many other cities." It also stated that there was "comparatively little church going among the Saint Louis working girls, the dance houses claiming the attendance of altogether too many, even of girls from thirteen years of age upwards."[99] The report further criticized the moral conditions of St. Louis by stating that there were "no libraries, lecture courses, or clubs to afford their advantages to working girls."[100]

The report also contained a section on the character of the working women, including an analysis of women who became prostitutes. The interviews were done by men, since it was deemed inappropriate to send women out to interview prostitutes. The men interviewed 3,866 prostitutes from fourteen of the original cities, including St. Louis. The women were asked about their former occupations and 1,236, stated they had no occupation prior to becoming prostitutes. The second largest number of women, 1,155, stated that they worked in homes, hotels, or in eating establishments prior to becoming prostitutes. The second largest group of working women who became prostitutes was composed of former dressmakers, milliners, seamstresses, or workers in "cloak and shirt factories," etcetera. This

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[98] US Department of Labor, Fourth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1888 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1889), 24.
[99] US Department of Labor, 25.
[100] US Department of Labor, 25.

group totaled 576 women and made up 14.9% of the total women.[101] In St. Louis in 1872, 14.62% of the total women registered as prostitutes claimed to have been former dressmakers, milliners, teachers, saleswomen, or clerks. The figure from the Department of Labor Report may not be large, but it does substantiate the figure from St. Louis for 1872.

In 1890, the Central Improvement Association, a committee consisting of over 250 propertied gentlemen, formally requested that the Board of Police Commissioners remove all "disreputable houses of every nature, kind, and description" from the central district in St. Louis. They felt that as taxpayers they were entitled to neighborhoods free from crime, especially prostitution. They then detailed the houses in their area that needed to be shut down and implied that the local police knew what was going on, but did nothing to stop it and would not do anything until the Board ordered them to do their jobs.[102]

Whether this petition worked is unclear, but prostitution and houses of ill-fame continued to plague the citizens of St. Louis through the turn of the century. Again in 1914, a different group of concerned citizens put forth yet another request to the police to abolish prostitution. By 1914, the citizens recognized that "in place of a licensed social evil St. Louis, like many other cities, substitutes a 'tolerated' district." The tolerated district was simply St. Louis' red-light district where prostitution was unofficially allowed. Prostitution was still illegal and the city government learned not to pass any laws that seemed to legitimize prostitution, but the city still tolerated prostitution in an unofficial manner. This also allowed the police to crack down on prostitution when the public began to complain, but ignore the problem whenever they wanted. By 1914, the houses were operating with a new

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[101] US Department of Labor, 74-75.
[102] The Central Improvement Association of St. Louis, "Communication to Board of Police Commissioners: Interview from Globe-Democrat with Bernard Kernan, Secretary," (St. Louis, MO: Ennis Press, 1890), 1-12.

"card system of registration" that was adopted by the Board of Police Commissioners. Under this registration system, the address of every brothel was kept on a list and only houses on the list were to be used for prostitution. Every house of ill-fame had an index with the names of the madam and all the inmates. The houses also had another index with more detailed information about the women such as their aliases, police records, and the names of their relatives. This system was quite similar to the Social Evil Ordinance, but it was never formally passed as a law, although the cards were allegedly maintained as part of the public records within the police department.[103] The petitions in 1890 and again in 1914 further demonstrated that prostitution was an ever-present problem in St. Louis.

[103] "Brief in Support of Citizens' Memorial to The Board of Police Commissioners of St. Louis, Missouri on the Illegality and Inexpediency of Segregating Commercialized Vice in St. Louis" (St. Louis, MO: No Publisher listed, 1914), 3-32.

CHAPTER 5

THE CYPRIANS OF ST. LOUIS

It has been manifest to all serious students of dress that of all the motives for the wearing of clothes, those connected with the sexual life have an altogether predominant position.

-----J. C. Flugel (1884-1955)[1]

J. C. Flugel, a clothing expert who wrote The Psychology of Clothes, assessed that the motives for wearing various forms of dress were intimately connected to sexual drives. However, there was more to clothing choice than just sexual motives, since many women of the nineteenth-century also chose their outfits in an attempt to achieve a higher social position, as will be shown. Many of the women in St. Louis also chose their apparel based on the jobs they had, such as shop clerk or factory worker. The women, however, did not always have enough money for food, shelter, and appropriate clothes for their jobs, so they had to find a way to supplement their incomes. One way to augment their earnings was through prostitution or streetwalking. The clothing of prostitutes throughout history, prostitution and its relation to fashion, and the influence of the apparel industry on whether women became prostitutes will be examined in this chapter.

THE FASHIONS OF PROSTITUTES

The following section is an answer to research question one. The section reveals what prostitutes and madams were actually wearing and if they were considered fashionable. It also covers whether the people of St. Louis made any attempt to restrict the clothing

[1] J. C. Flugel, The Psychology of Clothes (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1930), 25.

choices of the prostitutes. Finally, the section investigates whether there was any type of clothing or accessory item particular to the madams or prostitutes of St. Louis.

Prostitutes' clothing through history

Throughout history, prostitution has existed and where it has been, the individuals within the culture knew a prostitute when they saw her. However, the people from the past have not left an exact record of how they knew a prostitute simply by looking at her. For example, Proverbs 7:10 reads, "Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent." This implies the people of the time knew a prostitute when they saw one, but the verses do not describe exactly how the woman was dressed or how they were able to visually identify her as a prostitute.

In ancient Greece, all classes of prostitutes were required to dress in a specific manner to identify them as prostitutes and to separate them from respectable women. The prostitutes were required to wear multicolored *chitons* or "flowered robes;" however, this specification was not enough to designate which women were prostitutes, so the Greek politicians prohibited the prostitutes from wearing expensive items, such as jewelry and purple or "scarlet" colored clothes. Further, they were required to wear apparently cheap garments decorated with flowers or stripes of many colors. In many cases, the women also added garlands of flowers around their necks or on their heads. In some instances, the garments worn by prostitutes were sheer or transparent material which aided in advertising their role within Greek society. This, however, was not allowed in Sparta where respectable women frequently went about in transparent garments. In Sparta, prostitutes were required to cover themselves and only the virtuous women were allowed to go around in a state of semi-

nudity. The Greek prostitutes were usually identified by the golden color of their hair and those that were not naturally blond wore wigs.[2]

The officials of Ancient Rome also attempted to designate which women were prostitutes by requiring the women to dress in a distinctive manner.[3] The prostitutes of Rome were forbidden from wearing the following items: *stolas*, the traditional slip-like garment of virtuous Roman matrons; *vittae* in their hair, *soccus* shoes, jewelry, and purple garments. The prostitutes were required to wear *toga muliebris*, sandals with gilt thongs that tied over the foot, and their hair was either blond or red. In the imperial period, respectable women would never have worn *togas* so it was accepted that this garment was designated for prostitutes. The *toga muliebris* also were either flowered or green to further designate the women as prostitutes. Many prostitutes also willingly wore an *amiculum*, a type of jacket that was worn by adulterers, as well as transparent or sheer garments.[4]

In Medieval France, King Louis IX enacted royal decrees that included sumptuary laws with regard to the prostitutes. The decrees forbade the women from wearing items such as jewelry and high quality or expensive garments. The laws also required the women to wear a shoulder knot of a particular color. Although the specific color was not mentioned, it may have been red since that was the required color in Avignon. The laws specified in which areas of Paris the prostitutes were or were not allowed to live. In Avignon in the 1300s, prostitution was essentially legalized through the establishment of a public brothel. The

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[2] William W. Sanger, M. D. The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World (New York: The Medical Publishing Co., 1919), 45-46.
[3] Hilary Evans, The Oldest Profession: An Illustrated History of Prostitution (London: David & Charles Publishers, Ltd., 1979), 130-157.
[4] Sanger, 74-76; Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante, (eds.), The World of Roman Costume (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 50-53, 140-141.

prostitutes were required to live in that brothel and when they did go out in the city they were required to wear a red shoulder knot as a symbol of their status. [5]

In Italy during the fifteenth century, the government officials also enacted various sumptuary laws regulating the clothing of prostitutes. In most areas, the women were prohibited from wearing "fashionable attire,"[6] but beyond that each city-state had its own regulations regarding specific clothing items that the prostitutes were expected to wear. In Mantua and Parma, for example, the prostitutes were required to wear a short white cloak over their clothes and in Mantua they wore a badge on their chests. In Bergamo, the prostitutes covered their clothes with yellow cloaks and in Milan the law originally required the wearing of black woolen cloaks, but was later changed to black silk cloaks.[7]

American prostitutes in the nineteenth century

In nineteenth-century New York, there were several classes of prostitutes. The highest ranking women lived and worked in parlor houses. These women rarely left their houses except to purchase clothing or jewelry or to take an "afternoon promenade on the fashionable side of Broadway."[8] These women were "young and handsome, and always very well dressed," and they passed "through the streets without their real character being suspected by the uninitiated."[9] In fact, the women who were in the top level of the hierarchy of New York prostitutes were the best dressed and lived the most luxurious lifestyle that their

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[5] Sanger, 96-101.
[6] Sanger, 162.
[7] Sanger, 162-163.
[8] Sanger, 549-550.
[9] Sanger, 550.

ill-gotten gains could provide.[10] These women also wore "the latest and most superb fashions in dress"[11] and paid a hair-dresser to do their hair every day. In the nineteenth century, both women and men were hairdressers, although some women felt that women were better able to style another woman's hair and had a better concept of what women wanted. The hair-dressers visited the parlor houses each day and were paid from two to three dollars a week for their special services to the prostitutes. Apparently, this class of prostitutes was so fashionably dressed they could not be identified simply by looking at them.[12] The parlor houses in which these women lived were also well appointed and furnished in the most luxurious manner. The people who entered and lived in these houses behaved quite properly, at least in the common or public areas where profanity was prohibited and "no palpable obscenity" was allowed or observed.[13]

The descriptions of prostitutes from the nineteenth-century, as shown from the previous paragraphs, generally only included subjective comments regarding the clothes worn by the women, rather than specific mention of the types of garments the women actually wore. The descriptions about the apparel of the nineteenth century prostitutes, including but not exclusive to St. Louis, range from "handsome" or "fine" to "gaudy" and "flashy."[14] The clothing descriptions may best be grouped into the following categories: 1) expensive, 2) attention-getting, 3) current, and 4) unconventional. These categories are rather varied, but reveal that the prostitutes probably did not have a particular "uniform" or

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[10] The Committee of Fifteen, The Social Evil: With Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 6-7.
[11] Sanger, 551
[12] Virginia Penny, How Women can Make Money, Married or Single, in all Branches of the Arts and Sciences, Professions, Trades, Agricultural and Mechanical Pursuits (Springfield, MA: D. E. Fisk and Co., 1870; reprinted New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1971), 278 and Sanger, 549-551.
[13] Sanger, 550.
[14] Mason Long, Save the Girls (Fort Wayne, IN: Mason Long, 1885), 203; and J. A. Dacus and James W. Buel, A Tour of St. Louis (St. Louis, MO: Western Publishing Co., 1878).

specific manner in which they dressed. In general, the women dressed in a manner similar to the general styles of the day because they purchased the fabric for their dresses and other clothing items from local area merchants and used local dressmakers or seamstresses. However, the prostitutes or their dressmakers could make and may have made alterations to the dresses so that the garments were more revealing, with potentially lower necklines or shorter skirts. However this is difficult to determine, since I have found no evidence to either prove or disprove this possibility. As stated, the clothing descriptions from the period were generally subjective rather than descriptive and even if the clothing was described as gaudy or inappropriate there was no comment as to how or why the clothing was described in this way.

The manner in which the women dressed also may have been reflective of their different personalities, regional preferences, or even local availability of items. The types of apparel items available to the women and which they could afford may have varied greatly, but certainly could have included fashionable items.

The better paid madams and prostitutes as well as those of middle status within the profession may have had ample opportunity to purchase well-made dresses at reduced prices from second-hand clothing stores. The following description of the descent of a dress illustrates this idea. For example, an original dress created for an elite society lady of significant social standing may have begun its life as a custom made creation crafted to her precise fit and standards that could have cost as much as $700. The society lady only would have worn the dress a few times before she sold it to a second-hand store. Next, the dress may have been purchased by a wealthy woman in a different part of the country who again wore it to only a few events and then sold it to another second-hand store. At this point, the

dress was cleaned and resold again to a lower-class woman such as a madam or prostitute in an upper-level brothel who would have worn the dress to entice better paying customers. Eventually, the woman would have had to sell the dress to yet another second-hand store that was frequented by a lower-class clientele than the earlier second-hand stores. At this time, the dress may have been purchased by a woman of the streets such as an older prostitute who was in a low-level brothel or a common streetwalker. This woman wore the formerly exquisite creation to attract better-paying customers until it was no longer suitable or it simply did not fit. The dress ended its life in the hands of a ragman who sold scraps and bits of trim.[15]

This devolution of a dress suggests that a garment which began its life as an exquisite creation worth a large amount of money eventually could have wound up as the dress of a madam, a streetwalker, or even a lower-level prostitute. The story also shows that a variety of women could have owned a fashionable and well-made dress, which implies that madams and prostitutes could appear at least somewhat fashionable to their clientele and could have dressed in variations of the latest styles of the period. Therefore, even though the exact styles of clothing worn by the prostitutes was never explicitly stated, the story shows that the clothing of the prostitutes probably was similar to the popular styles of the time. The women also had to dress in such a way to attract the kind of customers who could pay well.

A dress certainly could have descended in the aforementioned manner in St. Louis because there were second-hand clothing stores in the city throughout the 1870s. There were as many as 23 in 1876 and as few as 5 in 1871. These stores certainly could have sold

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[15] "Descent of a $700.00 Gown; From Mistress to Maid it Passes Down the Social Scale," *New York Herald*, Sunday July, 13, 1902, Women and Children Section, p. 2.

clothing to poorer women, madams, prostitutes or any woman who simply wanted the stores' offerings.[16] In addition to second-hand clothing stores, the city directories of the 1870s also listed junk dealers, rag merchants, and other generic second-hand stores who sold a variety of items to their clientele.[17]

The exact styles the prostitutes wore also may not have been as important as how they were perceived by others at the time. For example, two women could have been seen wearing similar style dresses, but one could have been perceived negatively due to the way in which she was standing, where she was located, or even who she was. In this instance, how or where the dress was worn and who wore the dress were more important than the actual style. The prostitutes' clothing was often negatively described with descriptions ranging from "gaudy" and "flashy"[18] to "costly" and "handsome."[19] The first two descriptions may have been the result of the observer's knowledge of the women as prostitutes, rather than of the prostitutes' particular clothing choices. When a person knew the individual under

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[16] Richard Edwards, ed., Edwards' Twelfth Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1870, (St. Louis, MO: Southern Publishing Co., 1870), 988; Richard Edwards, ed., Edwards' Thirteenth Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1871, (St. Louis, MO: Southern Publishing Co., 1871), 745; David B. Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, (St. Louis, MO: Review Steam Press, 1872), I:858-860; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis City Directory for 1873, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould & Co., Publishers, 1873), 986; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1874, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1874), 1044; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1875), 1067-1068; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1876, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1876), 1057; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1877), 1086; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1878, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1878), 1061; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1879, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1879), 1110; David B. Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1880, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publisher, 1880), 1186.

[17] Edwards, ed., Edwards' 12th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1870, 1036, 1082; Edwards, ed., Edwards' 13th Annual Directory in the City of St. Louis for 1871, 821-822; Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, I:937; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis City Directory for 1873, 1035, 1088; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1874, 1105, 1167; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1875, 1190; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1876, 1124, 1186; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1877, 1147, 1208-1209; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1878, 1114, 1172; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1879, 1166, 1226; Gould, ed., Gould's St. Louis Directory, for 1880, 1246, 1314.

[18] Dacus and Buel, 442, 446-447.

[19] Long, 203-204.

consideration, the personal knowledge naturally affected the person's judgment of the clothing; therefore, a negative opinion of the wearer usually resulted in a negative assessment of their clothes and vice versa, such as in the first two terms. This explains why many of the clothing descriptions had a negative connotation. Not all descriptions were negative, though, as shown by the latter two terms, and this was due to the fact that the people doing the assessments did not know or did not hold a negative opinion of the women. The second group included Mason Long, who was attempting to help the women and saw them as victims of society rather than bad women who willingly chose an immoral lifestyle.[20]

Further evidence of personal knowledge affecting the opinion of the woman under investigation is found in Mattie Silks, a madam who lived and worked in Denver from 1877 until the city officials shut down the red-light district in 1915. Mattie was a Colorado madam for most of her life and never really tried to leave the profession. During her life, she was involved with a man named Corteze "Cort" Thomson. She and Cort lived together for many years until their marriage in 1884, following the death of Cort's first wife. The reason why Cort never obtained a divorce is unclear, but it may have been due to the fact that throughout his life he aspired to be a traditional Southern gentleman and in the nineteenth-century gentlemen did not divorce their wives, they simply had mistresses.[21]

In 1897, Mattie and Cort traveled to Great Britain for a grand vacation. They had a splendid time and apparently did not have any trouble, nor were they recognized as a Denver madam and her gambler husband. Mattie also had a substantial income from her brothels so she and Cort dressed well. They were apparently accepted in Great Britain merely as

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[20] Long, 34-38.

[21] Forbes Parkhill, The Wildest of the West (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951), 207-286; and Jennifer Schulle, "The Madams of Denver's Market Street: Their Clothing and Their Lives" (M. A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1996), 41-50.

American tourists and those in Britain certainly did not know of Mattie's lifestyle in Colorado. Since Mattie and Cort were not known, they were merely judged on how they appeared to those in Britain, namely as wealthy American tourists. However, when they returned home they were again judged based on who they were even though they appeared fashionable while on vacation in Great Britain.[22]

The lack of specific clothing description in the primary source materials also were due to the fact that the audience of the time already knew the common clothing styles and therefore did not need a detailed description. The readers assumed the people being discussed were wearing typical clothing of the period; therefore the specific clothing items were not as important as how the wearers were perceived by those around them. The audience did not know how the women should have been perceived or what judgments to make about the women's clothes; consequently, those were the concepts about which the authors wrote, rather than a detailed listing of clothing items.[23]

Louis W. Flaccus conducted a study, where he sent questionnaires to young women from a New York City Normal School during the 1904-1905 school year. Flaccus was an educator of the period, was writing an article about young women's attitudes on clothing and the psychological effect that clothing had on them. The young women stated they judged the character of those they encountered "by the style of apparel" they wore. The same young women also said apparel affected and influenced their first impression of people they had just met.[24] Even though the young women were questioned in the early 1900s, they were expressing ideas and attitudes they learned from their parents who were born and raised

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[22] Parkhill, 207-286 and Schulle 41-50.
[23] Anne Hollander, Seeing Through Clothes (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 311, 418-422.
[24] Louis W. Flaccus, "Remarks on the Psychology of Clothes" The Pedagogical Seminary, Vol. 13, no. 1, March 1906, 78.

during the late nineteenth century. The study further suggests that perception of clothing was of critical importance to people of the late nineteenth-century.[25]

When people were reading books or articles, they were unable to make their own judgments since they could not see the people being described; and, as Flaccus showed, people often judged each other based on their clothing. Consequently, readers relied upon the author's judgment of the apparel and overall appearance of the women discussed in the books. It was simply not practical or necessarily possible to include photographs of the madams or prostitutes being described. Therefore, the judgment descriptions were even more critical since the readers needed the author's guidance in determining the kind of judgments they should make with regard to the subject. This also helps explain why perception accounts were the primary type of descriptions mentioned in the various primary source materials.

St. Louis prostitutes

There is no evidence to show precisely how the St. Louis prostitutes dressed. However, the prostitutes of the "first class" dressed in "rich attire" and were not any more or less fashionable than the genteel women.[26] The lack of specific clothing descriptions for St. Louis prostitutes also implied that the women did not wear anything unusual or unique and that they probably did not have a specific manner in which they dressed. In other words, the madams and prostitutes did not have a uniform or a particular look that was unique to them. However, as previously stated in Chapter 4, the women were legally barred from wearing

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[25] Flaccus, 61-83.

[26] Charles P. Johnson, "Speech of Lieutenant Governor Charles P. Johnson, on the Bill to Abolish the So-Called Social Evil Law of the City of St. Louis, Delivered in the Senate of Missouri, Thursday, February 19, 1874" (St. Louis, MO: Regan and Carter, Printers and Binders, 1874), 14.

clothing that was deemed "lewd" or "indecent" by the law listing offences against public morals and decency.

There is no evidence that the St. Louis City Council passed any ordinances specifying the types of clothing the madams and prostitutes had to wear, only that the City outlawed the wearing of clothing that was deemed lewd, too revealing, or were "men's clothes." The Social Evil Ordinance required the registration and medical examination of the madams and prostitutes, so there was really no need to visually distinguish them as a group. They were already permanently listed with the Board of Health and the Board of Police Commissioners; therefore, there simply was no need to further separate them from the rest of society. When a prostitute registered, she had to give her name, any aliases, permanent address, age, and former occupation. The women were not allowed to move without first obtaining a permit to change residence from the Chief of Police. The only way a woman could be removed from the lists was either by moving to another city, agreeing to leave the profession and requesting removal, or dying. The lists were not public, but were available to the Board of Health which included the physicians making the weekly inspections, as well as the Board of Police Commissioners. These lists essentially separated the prostitutes from the rest of respectable society, so no additional label was necessary.[27]

MOTIVES FOR BECOMING A PROSTITUTE

The next section answers research question two. The section reveals reasons why women became prostitutes, and considers whether apparel, the apparel and textile industry, or the desire for fashionable clothing played a part in bringing women into prostitution.

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[27] Social Evil Ordinance, and Duane R. Sneddeker, "Regulating Vice; Prostitution and the St. Louis Social Evil Ordinance, 1870-1874." Gateway Heritage, 11, 2 (Fall, 1990): 20-47.

The people of the Gilded Age worried about the morality and proper upbringing of their girls because they believed that young men could be reformed when they erred, but once young women were lost, they were irredeemable. Victorian parents held various fears for their daughters, including unchecked vanity and the excessive desire for fashionable clothing, because these desires could easily lead their daughters off the proper moral path. The people of the Gilded Age also did not train their young women to think independently or worry themselves with preparing for a career, since most girls were raised with the expectation that they would marry young and primarily work as wives and mothers. Therefore, young women were not adequately prepared to enter the adult world.

Vanity

Warnings were routinely published in etiquette, education, and other books of the period to alert parents to the danger of unchecked vanity, or excessive pride in one's appearance and accomplishments, in their daughters. Such warnings were published at least as early as the 1840s about the dangers if young women were not properly trained to be considerate of others rather than vain.[28] Since an excessive love of dress was vain, it was an undesirable trait, and such warnings continued throughout the century with advice from people such as Dr. Dio Lewis in the 1870s. Diocletian Lewis was a physician born in New York in 1823, and educated at Harvard, who later moved to Boston where he founded a school that emphasized physical training as a way to achieve good health. Dr. Lewis emphasized homeopathic remedies rather than drugs as the best way to achieve good health.

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[28] Archbishop Fenelon, The Education of a Daughter (Baltimore, MA: John Murphy & Co., 1847), 97. The book jacket states the book was originally written in France in 1687 and then was republished in America in 1847; the book I examined was a modern reprint by Applewood Books of Bedford, MA, no date listed.

Lewis also advocated temperance and hygiene as well as dress reform. Lewis died in 1886 in Younkers, New York.[29] In his book Chastity: Or Our Secret Sins, Lewis encouraged chastity and proper moral behavior in young women and men. Lewis also warned young women that "vanity and love of dress often lead girls astray" and asserted that a young woman's mind had to be filled with other, nobler thoughts and pursuits. He went on to say vanity and the love of dress were only dangerous to young women who were "idle and empty-headed," but were of little worry to women who were more interested in their duties and "the demands of their business," whatever business that may have been.[30]

Mason Long was another individual who warned parents and young women about the dangers of vanity and the resultant interest in clothes by saying, "Too often weak parents encourage a love of dress in their daughters, and the consequences are frequently of the most terrible nature." Long went on to state that, "a love of dress and gay society" could overwhelm a young woman's "senses, blind her judgment and obliterate in her mind the great distinctions between right and wrong."[31] This was yet another admonition against the vain desire for fashionable clothing and the dire consequences that could result.

The strong connection between vanity and a young woman's desire for fashionable clothing was also obvious to the women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ida M. Tarbell, for example, was associate editor of *The American Magazine* from 1906 to 1915 where she originally published parts of her book about women, The Business of Being a Woman. Tarbell was born in 1857 and was a product of nineteenth-century beliefs and

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[29] James Grant Wilson and John Fiske (eds.), Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography, Volume 3 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1887), 702; and Patricia A. Cunningham, Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art (Kent, OH: The Kent State university Press, 2003), 29-30.
[30] Dr. Dio Lewis, Chastity: Or Our Secret Sins (New York: Clarke Brothers, 1874), 291-292.
[31] Long, 184-187.

traditions, so she was naturally able to comment upon the changing nature of women's roles in society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In her book, she described the desire for clothing and the ability to make oneself appear attractive as "one of the most domineering impulses" in women. She connected the vanity of young women and the desire to look beautiful with the yearning for fashionable clothing.[32]

St. Louis adults also confronted the problem of young women in need of "preservation" from the dangers of vanity and the love of fine clothing. J. A. Dacus and James W. Buel in their book A Tour of St. Louis, described all aspects of St. Louis in 1878, from the successful businesses to the police and, of course, prostitution, also known as "The Social Evil." Both Dacus and Buel were experienced writers who met while working on the *Missouri Republican.* Dacus wrote both newspaper and magazine articles on any subject from politics to religion. Buel was also a newspaper correspondent who was known for his ability to learn the inner workings of the city and its politicians and then convey that knowledge in an interesting manner.[33] These combined experiences made Dacus and Buel ideal citizens to examine and describe the good and bad aspects of St. Louis through the publication of their book.

In the book, the authors defined two distinct classes of prostitutes in the city. The lower class consisted of women who were born into the lowest levels of society and who only knew of and used illegal or immoral methods to earn a living. The other class, also known as "high-toned prostitutes,"[34] consisted of women who were born under better circumstances and had a strong moral upbringing. Dacus and Buel also warned that in young

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[32] Ida M. Tarbell, The Business of Being a Woman (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1912), 109-141.
[33] "Our Treasury," The Inland Monthly Magazine, Vol. 4, No. 4, December 1873, pp. 411-412; and "Our Treasury," The Inland Monthly Magazine, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1874, pp. 70-71.
[34] Dacus and Buel, 445.

women "vanity is a fatal disease" and that vanity attacked all women equally, with the same dismal results regardless of status or upbringing.[35] The authors did not name any women specifically, but they said that many of the women who became prostitutes were "young girls fresh from the country, allured by the splendor of an idle life, with plenty of fine clothes and flashy jewelry, undreaming of the dreariness and horror of the end."[36] The young women surrendered "their charms for a price, enter(ed) a bagnio, and start(ed) on the journey, down, down, down, to the low depths, to the hospital bed, to death, and the dissecting table at last."[37] The authors painted a dark and dismal picture of life for the young women who were vain enough to follow the path paved with fashionable clothes and lavish jewelry.

Love of dress

The idea that an excessive desire for fashionable clothing led young women into prostitution was prevalent in the nineteenth century and has already been shown to a small extent in the previous section. This idea was frequently expressed by social reform advocates and others who worried about the morality and social status of young women.[38] The reason why this idea had such a firm hold on people of the nineteenth century was because societal beliefs of the time were focused on the importance of fashion in women's lives. No one in the nineteenth century questioned the importance of dressing appropriately for one's status and circumstances and certainly no one questioned the importance of fashion in the lives of women. These instilled cultural biases affected how many people viewed their world and evaluated the reasons for why various things such as prostitution happened. These

[35] Dacus and Buel, 446.
[36] Dacus and Buel, 442.
[37] Dacus and Buel, 442.
[38] Dacus and Buel; Long; Ralph Wardlaw, D. D., Lectures on Female Prostitution: Its nature, Extent, Effects, Guilt, Causes and Remedy (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1842).

biases affected people of various backgrounds such as Jane Addams, Dr. Thomas Kennard, and Mason Long, among others.

However, not all people of the nineteenth century were as seriously affected by these cultural biases because there were some who believed that the desire for fashionable clothing was not the primary cause of prostitution. The beliefs of the era ranged from absolute certainty that dress was the cause of prostitution to complete conviction that clothing had nothing to do with women's motivations for becoming prostitutes. There were scientists and physicians at each end of the range of reasons why women became prostitutes (Figure 9). Thomas Kennard held the belief that clothing and the desire for fashionable apparel were the main reasons why women prostituted themselves. Even though he admitted that women also were adversely affected by poverty, he could not separate himself from the ingrained belief that fashion was of utmost importance to women and could therefore drive them to actually sell themselves.[39] Conversely, Dr. William Sanger dedicated merely a single paragraph of his 676 page book *The History of Prostitution* to the idea that the "Love of Dress" was a motive for why women became prostitutes. Within that paragraph, Dr. Sanger refuted the idea that love of dress was a reasonable explanation for prostitution.[40] Influential individuals in the nineteenth century who dealt with reform and other women's interests, such as Jane Addams, Virginia Penny, and Mason Long, fell between the opposing viewpoints of the doctors.[41]

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[39] Thomas Kennard, "Prostitution: Its Causes – Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Relations – Its Irrepressible Nature, and our Right and Duty to Control It," The Medical Archives, Vol. 7, No. 6, 705-719.
[40] Sanger, 331.
[41] Jane Addams, A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 55-94; Penny, 96-100, 128-140; and Long, 32-49.

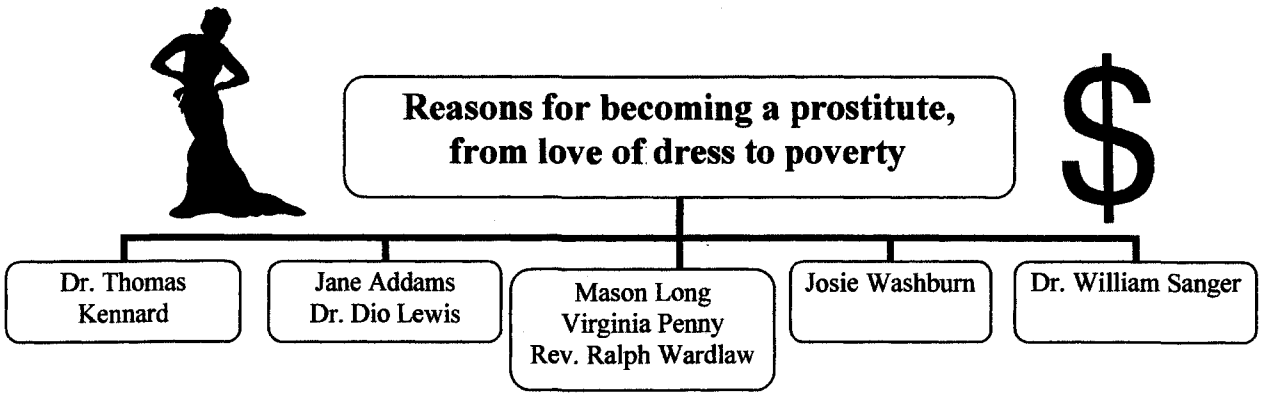

Figure 9 – Range of reasons why women became prostitutes and where various individuals fell along the line.

At one end of the range of reasons (Figure 9), Dr. Kennard stated the love of dress was "not the generally received opinion, but it is, nevertheless, the true one" regarding why women turned to prostitution.[42] In 1872, Kennard presented a report to the St. Louis Medical Society entitled "Prostitution: Its Causes – Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Relations – Its Irrepressible Nature, and Our Right and Duty to Control It." Kennard was the vice-president of the Medical Association of the State of Missouri and a member of the St. Louis Medical Society. In his report, Kennard said financial necessity was also a reason why women became prostitutes, but he did not believe it was the primary reason. He reiterated his point that women had a desire to "gratify their vanity by dress," and went on to state that the desire for fashionable apparel was more of a cause than the desire to maintain the affections of a boyfriend or to satisfy a woman's passion for her lover. In fact, Dr. Kennard said, "where one woman is thus forced to surrender her virtue" to gratify her sexual passion, "a hundred sacrifice it [virtue] for the love of fine dress, for the sake of living in indolence, for the desire

[42] Kennard, 708.

for admiration, for the determination to be freed from the galling restraints of home and the unnatural harshness and indifference of parents."[43] Dr. Kennard also blamed the parents or guardians of young women who indulged their daughter's "lascivious mode of dress."[44] Moreover, he said that "extravagance in dress and a general desire for display is ruining the females of this country."[45] Kennard claimed that poor women were essentially being "excluded from society" since they were not able to dress as well as their wealthier counterparts. This exclusion from the genteel members of society then led the desperate young women to sacrifice their virtue either specifically for the desired clothing or for the money to purchase the more fashionable and expensive apparel. Wearing this apparel then helped the women appear as if they were part of the class that had previously excluded them. The doctor also condemned parents for not properly training their daughters to appreciate more than just their appearance and to take more seriously their behavior in places, such as church, where their appearance should have been the last thing on their minds.[46]

Kennard held fairly strong opinions regarding the nature of prostitution, and, therefore, he is important to this study. Dr. Sanger, in theory a man of science, held a vastly different opinion regarding the reasons why women became prostitutes. In fact, Kennard's opinions were more similar to those of Jane Addams than those of Sanger.[47]

Jane Addams was a social reformer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1860, Addams, the youngest of eight children, was born to a wealthy family in Illinois. Addams' father John continuously encouraged his youngest daughter to achieve all

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[43] Kennard, 714.
[44] Kennard, 714.
[45] Kennard, 714.
[46] Kennard, 714-716.
[47] Kennard, 708-716.

she could. He sent her to Rockford Female Seminary for an education where she was encouraged to do missionary work. Throughout her early life, Addams main goal was to please her father, but when he died just after her graduation from Rockford, she no longer had anyone to guide her. The years following her father's death were difficult for Jane Addams. She attempted to study medicine at Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, but her education there was interrupted by her poor health and her feelings of uncertainty about her future.[48] Throughout this time, Addams stepmother encouraged her in the typical pursuits of affluent young women; culture and the "refinements and graces of womanhood."[49] This was unfulfilling for Addams because she wondered about what she could do with the education and training her father had insisted upon. In 1887, Addams took another voyage to Europe, this time with her friend Ellen Gates Starr. This trip, in particular, was introspective for the two young women and it was this trip that impelled them to create Hull House. While in London the young women visited Toynbee Hall, a settlement house dedicated to "bringing culture, art and education to the working classes" of London's East End.[50] Upon their return, Addams purchased a once-grand mansion in Chicago and began to pursue the activities that became her life's work including labor reform, women's suffrage, and the rights of the impoverished. Even though Addams worked on various social reform matters throughout her life, she did not specifically advocate health or dress reform.[51]

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[48] Marilyn Fischer, On Addams (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2004), 2-4; and Christopher Lasch, ed., The Social Thoughts of Jane Addams (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), xv-xvii; and James Weber Linn, Jane Addams: A Biography (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1-128.
[49] Lasch, xvii.
[50] Fischer, 2-4.
[51] Lasch, xiii-xxii.

In 1889, Addams co-founded Hull House; a settlement home in Chicago that provided welfare to needy families. The staff of Hull House also worked to combat all types of juvenile delinquency, including prostitution, through the Juvenile Protection Agency, a philanthropic organization dedicated to helping young women and men, whose main office was next door to Hull House. In 1912, as an outgrowth of her work, Addams published a book regarding the prevalence of prostitution among Chicago's young women, hoping to reveal the "dangers implicit in city conditions and of the allurements which are designedly placed around many young girls in order to draw them into an evil life."[52]

Addams, discussing why young women became prostitutes, acknowledged that women frequently claimed economic necessity as the reason for their downfall. However, she doubted that financial necessity alone was truly the reason. As she stated, "although economic pressure as a reason for entering an illicit life has thus been brought out in court by the evidence in a surprising number of cases, there is no doubt that it is often exaggerated; a girl always prefers to think that economic pressure is the reason for her downfall, even when the immediate causes have been her love of pleasure, her desire for finery, or the influence of evil companions."[53] The "finery" mentioned by Addams included fashionable clothing and jewelry. Moreover, Addams avowed that poverty alone was not the reason women became prostitutes, because they were striving for a standard of living that was simply too much above what they could realistically attain on their wages. Again, Addams was so affected by the standard beliefs of her time that she could not accept that anything could more seriously affect women's lives than fashion, even though she had evidence to the contrary living within

[52] Addams, ix.
[53] Addams, 58-59.

Hull House. Addams further asserted that a young woman working in an illicit trade could earn as much as four times what she could by doing "any honest work." Additionally, the young women only saw the immediate benefits of being able to earn a large sum of money and did not realize that they would only have a brief time of increased earnings, since most prostitutes only averaged about four years in the profession before they died or succumbed to drugs, alcohol, or sexually transmitted diseases.[54]

Jane Addams worked with the young women on a daily basis and frequently spoke with them with regard to how and why they became prostitutes. In her book, Addams also described a common technique of male procurers in dance halls or other social occasions. She stated that men usually assumed one of two roles depending on their own age. If the procurer was a younger man, he assumed the guise of a young, wealthy swain whose parents insisted he marry a well-to-do young woman whom he claimed he did not love. However, he said he preferred an ordinary woman such as the girl with whom he was speaking. He then romanced the young woman, convinced her of his feelings, and impressed her with all the wonderful things he would do for her if she just remained with him (Figure10). Throughout the evening, he got the girl drunk, stayed out with her all night, and kept her away from her family so she was socially, if not actually, compromised. Eventually, he introduced her to the life he was <u>really</u> offering her, but she was either too ashamed or too enamored of the fine things he gave her to return to her family and her former life.[55]

The image in Figure 10 illustrates a situation such as the one described by Addams in her book. The image shows a fashionably dressed young woman being escorted by an older

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[54] Addams, 56-59.
[55] Addams, 152-153.

male companion. She appears to be wearing an evening dress with short sleeves and a full, bustle skirt. Her hair is up and she is wearing one or two necklaces. She also appears quite young and innocent. However, the two men on the left side of the image appear to be plotting a way to encounter the young woman. They look well dressed and do not appear to be common laborers. Based on the caption, the men also have nefarious plans for the young woman. The lady does not look poor, but that did not mean that she was not vulnerable to the advances of potential procurers who were claiming to offer love and marriage, but really were just trying to seduce the young women and force the women to become indebted to them. Once indebted, the women were more vulnerable and therefore easier to coerce into immoral or illegal activities.[56]

Figure 10 – "Waiting for their Victims" – In this image, a young woman is about to encounter a set of procurers at a fashionable dance.[57]

[56] Long, 100-105.
[57] Long, 103.

If the procurer was older, he assumed the guise of a gentleman who could get the poor young woman a different job with a significantly better wage. The man often commented upon the shabbiness of the young woman's clothing and remarked that it was "a shame that such a pretty girl" could not "dress better," but that she could dress better if only she trusted him to get her a better job. The men, both young and old, typically used clothing and other finery as inducements to lure the poor young women out of their old lives and, once the women were compromised, they were more easily introduced to the profession of prostitution.[58] The procurers played upon the young women's natural desire for fashionable apparel in order to achieve their ultimate goals.

Procurers, or panderers as they were also known, were common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. White slavery was a widespread fear for people of the nineteenth-century and panderers were well known in the white slave trade. They often worked between cities and one such city linkage was between Chicago and St. Louis. Apparently, the procurers traveled from Chicago to St. Louis to trap innocent young women "upon the pretext of receiving more inviting employment and higher wages."[59] Since many young women who worked did not receive adequate wages, the prospect of traveling to another city to receive a better job was too good to resist. Once the young women went to Chicago, they became indebted to the panderers for their travel expenses and did not know anyone else in the city, so they were completely dependent upon the panderers. Chicago detectives became aware of the ring and investigated it; by 1909 they had enough evidence to arrest the procurers and free the young women within the Chicago brothel. The ring was led

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[58] Addams, 152-153.
[59] Clifford G. Roe, The Great War on White Slavery; or Fighting for the Protection of Our Girls (No city listed: Clifford G. Roe and B. S. Steadwell, 1911), 112.

by two couples; Maurice and Julia Van Bever were the leaders of the organization and they forced Mike and Mollie Hart to assist them in the trade. This is just one example of how the procurers worked, but The War on White Slavery is full of similar examples from other cities throughout the country. However, even the book about white slavery was unable to estimate how many procurers were actually working in America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[60]

As a woman who worked with the young women who became prostitutes, Jane Addams was definitely speaking from a female perspective when she linked love of finery and clothing to why women became prostitutes. However, she also was a woman who grew up in an affluent home with a stepmother who encouraged her to pursue the typical activities of women of her period. Even though Addams followed her own path in life, she was not able to separate herself from the ingrained class biases of her wealthy upbringing. When discussing the girls with whom she worked, Addams frequently mentioned the financial difficulties of the young women. However, like any woman of her social class, Addams rigidly clung to the belief that a desire for fashionable clothing was central to why women became prostitutes.[61] Addams was close to the center of the line of reasons why women became prostitutes, but right in the center was Mason Long (Figure 9).

Long, an author as well as a reformed gambler, wrote, "One of the fruitful causes of prostitution is the love of dress, which, in the breasts of so many women, is the overpowering passion and which leads such multitudes of them into careers of infamy." Long went on to say that "many foolish girls have been led by this passion to sell their virtue for gold, in order

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[60] Roe, 109-124.
[61] Addams, 234.

to possess the means of bedecking their bodies with gorgeous raiment" because the "silly creatures envy the gaily, flashily dressed courtesan whom they pass on the street, and imagine she is happy because of her magnificent apparel."[62] This passage also shows that in some American cities the genteel women and the prostitutes encountered each other and therefore saw how the women from the other group dressed.

As a reformed gambler, Long frequented places where he saw many prostitutes, prior to his reformation. He also was exposed to frequent efforts and arguments for the reformation of men who were considered "degraded" because they were gamblers or drunkards, but he claimed he never saw equal efforts for the recovery of degraded women. Eventually, Long ceased gambling and wrote a book because he wondered why "we hear little or nothing of 'reformed women.'"[63] He also wanted to champion the cause of lost women and "to plead the cause of these wretched outcasts and present their claims for consideration" to all people so young women and girls could be saved and reformed as were so many young men.[64]

Mason Long warned of the consequences of an unrestricted desire for fashionable apparel, stating that many young women "come to regard dress as the chief aim and object of woman's existence; and to possess the means to gratify this passion, they are ready to exchange their dearest treasure, that most priceless jewel, their virtue."[65] Long also advised parents about protecting their daughters from an avid desire for fashionable apparel and insisted parents instill in their daughters a stronger sense of morality than of fashionability. Long cautioned parents against succumbing to their daughters' pleas for fashionable apparel

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[62] Long, 175.
[63] Long, 5.
[64] Long, 5 (Preface).
[65] Long, 177.

and warned against allowing their daughters to go about unescorted. Long related the story of a family with six beautiful and willful daughters and two weak parents who encouraged "a love of dress in their daughters." As a result of the girls' "love of dress," three of them lost their virtue and their lives to their "wicked" desire for fashionable clothing and an exciting lifestyle.[66]

Long was not the only reformed individual who wrote about prostitution, but his counterpart, a woman, set more store by poverty than vanity. Josie Washburn was a reformed, nineteenth-century prostitute from Nebraska who wrote "a critical analysis of brothel prostitution" with "a sure and angry voice of experience."[67] Washburn was able to speak from experience, unlike reformers such as Jane Addams. Washburn warned that among other things, poverty and lack of respectable options for earning a decent wage were primary reasons why women became prostitutes. She stated that "the starvation wages" which women earned were responsible for many women's ruin and that clothing was only partly responsible, since women could not afford to purchase decent clothing on their meager salaries. Many women who worked as clerks in dry goods stores and later department stores were unduly tempted by the beautiful fabrics or clothing items that they could not otherwise afford. She understood how easy it was for a woman to succumb to her desire for a full stomach covered with a dress made from the beautiful fabric she may have sold. Washburn understood the dire circumstances that led women into prostitution and she wrote her book so that genteel women could also understand the problem. She voiced hope that her readers would help their less fortunate sisters by putting these ideas to their husbands, and pushing

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[66] Long, 187-194.

[67] Josie Washburn, The Underworld Sewer; A Prostitute Reflects on Life in the Trade, 1871-1909 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), v, introduction written by Sharon E. Wood for the republication.

for political action and genuine charitable assistance. Washburn hoped genteel women would actually help the reformed prostitutes rather than simply talking about reform without offering any real assistance. Washburn acknowledged that "too little money creates the underworld" and "too much money creates fashionable society as it is." Therefore a more equitable balance of money was required to provide balance between the members of the underworld and the upper-class of society.[68]

The middle of the range of reasons also included a minister and educator troubled with the spiritual well-being of people. In 1842, Reverend Ralph Wardlaw, D.D., a Scottish minister and authority on the problems of education and prostitution, was petitioned by a group of Memorialists of various Scottish churches to speak on the problem of prostitution and "the suppression of female profligacy." As a result, Dr. Wardlaw presented three lectures in Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1842. These were originally presented to all-male audiences, but the Memorialists felt the content of the lectures was so important and useful to parents of young women that later that year they published the lectures for distribution to a much larger audience which included Scotland, England, and America.[69]

In the lectures, Wardlaw discussed the problem of prostitution with regard to its nature, extent, effects, causes and remedies. Rev. Wardlaw listed such causes as destitution, parental desertion, and the need to support family members. On the other side, he counted "licentiousness of inclination; irritability of temper; and pride and love of dress"[70] as roots of prostitution. With regard to "pride and love of dress," Wardlaw warned that of all the various reasons why women entered into prostitution there was not "one more general or

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[68] Washburn, 13-25, 153, 217.
[69] Wardlaw, *v-x*.
[70] Wardlaw, 106-107.

more powerful, than this ambition for fine dress."[71] Wardlaw claimed that the desire to show off one's status through the use of fashionable and expensive apparel was common. Even when a woman could dress well through honest means, her desire to do so was "injurious" to her moral character because she was giving in to temptation and that was dangerous for any reputable Victorian woman of proper moral upbringing. According to Rev. Wardlaw, the desire for fashionable apparel endangered the proper moral development of nineteenth-century young women, leading them to yield to their baser desires; such a course could result in their becoming prostitutes. This was also the earliest nineteenth-century book that connected the love of fashionable apparel with women eventually becoming prostitutes.[72]

In 1866, another etiquette book warned against excessive love of dress, but did not cast such dire warnings. Arthur Martine, the author of that book, asserted that a love of nice clothing was natural to young women and should not have been denied, but that the choice of apparel should have been consistent with good taste in order to reflect a continuity between the young woman's "internal character and external appearance" so everyone who saw her recognized her quality of character and family breeding.[73] Martine further advised young people to "consider the sort of company you are likely to meet, and endeavor to assimilate to them as much as possible."[74] This advice was originally intended for genteel young men and women, but the idea spread throughout the various class levels. The better paid madams and prostitutes prospered from that advice, since the women attracted wealthy customers by

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[71] Wardlaw, 108.
[72] Wardlaw, 105-109.
[73] Arthur Martine, Martine's Handbook of Etiquette and Guide to True Politeness: A Complete Manual for those who Desire to Understand the Rules of Good Breeding, The Customs of Good Society, and to Avoid Incorrect and Vulgar Habits (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1866), 53. Republished in 1996 by Applewood Books of Bedford, MA.
[74] Martine, 55.

assimilating with their potential customers so as to attract their attention. When the women dressed expensively, they also showed the men literally how much their company cost.

Dr. Lewis also was closer to the middle of the range of reasons (Figure 9) because he acknowledged that a love of dress often led many young women off the path of proper behavior and decorum. Lewis worked extensively with women, as did Sanger, advocating chastity and encouraging women and men to remain chaste prior to marriage. Lewis, unlike Sanger, acknowledged that the desire for nice quality clothing could lead weak-minded women into sin and eventually prostitution. Dr. Lewis, however felt that if women remained interested in their proper business and remained chaste then they would not feel an excessive desire for or love of dress and therefore would not be lured into sinful behavior in order to fulfill that desire.[75] Lewis cautioned women against wearing dresses with low necks and short sleeves because he said those design features signified "a slavery to man's passions;" and when a woman dressed in that manner, she appeared as if she was in the "company of the 'unfortunates.'" By "unfortunates" he probably meant women who had lost their virtue and who were no longer chaste. Lewis also encouraged women to dress in "plain, neat, becoming garments" that were not excessively padded or trimmed. As stated, he discouraged the wearing of dresses with short sleeves or low necklines. Lewis also stated that women should dress is a healthful manner and should not indulge in tight lacing, which he termed an "outrage upon [a] woman's body." Ultimately, Dio Lewis was interested in women's health and moral well-being, and he spoke out in favor of anything that supported those causes.[76]

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[75] Lewis, Chastity, 223-292.
[76] Dio Lewis, Our Girls (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1871), 48-55, 80, 191-198.

Virginia Penny was another individual who was close to the middle of the range of reasons (Figure 9). Penny wrote that she was interested in "matters pertaining to woman's labor and compensation" and worked diligently to enhance women's lives through the publication of her books, one of which will be discussed later. In 1868, Penny published Think and Act, a book that contained "a few sober reflections on woman and her business interests." Within that book, she discussed the apparel of "work-people" and stated that she had heard a lady remark that women who worked were "more excusable for trying to dress well than idle ones, who do nothing." She neither endorsed nor refuted the comment, but went on to state that "a too great fondness for dress, we know, is the bane of many working girls. They spend all for dress – so have nothing when out of employment. It is undoubtedly, in some cases, the cause of prostitution." She did not state that she encountered any prostitutes, but she was interested in working women and the myriad problems they encountered due to their poor wages. The fact that Penny stated fashion led some women into prostitution further shows how common and pervasive this idea was among middle- and upper-class individuals of the nineteenth century.[77]

At the opposite end of the motivation line was Dr. William Sanger. He acknowledged that many authors who wrote about prostitution, such as Dr. Kennard, pointed to a love of dress as the reason why women became prostitutes. However, Sanger contended that it was "doubtful if any woman ever positively sold her virtue for a new gown or a knot of ribbons."[78] Sanger, speaking from a purely scientific perspective, found it difficult to believe that clothing held such an important place in women's lives because he was judged

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[77] Virginia Penny, Think and Act: A Series of Articles Pertaining to Men and Women, Work and Wages (Philadelphia, PA: Claxton, Remsen, & Haffelfinger, 1868; reprint New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1971), 6, 11-12, and 139-140.
[78] Sanger, 331.

by his profession rather than by his appearance as women were typically judged. He defined himself through his work and accomplishments, so it was difficult for Sanger to accept that women used clothes to define themselves and their worth in society. This also was a strictly female phenomenon and etiquette books told women that how they appeared was of vital importance since, "one can always tell a real lady from an imitation one by her style of dress."[79] In the nineteenth century, women were defined by their clothes and their homes, whereas men were defined by their occupations or accomplishments.

Appearance was of key importance to nineteenth-century women because it established their social identity and identity in turn "establishes what and where the person is in social terms."[80] Therefore, appearance was critically important to women. This idea was further reinforced by Dr. Lewis who stated that even in America "we may judge very correctly, in most cases, by the every-day dress, of the position of the wearer."[81] Again, Lewis acknowledged this aspect of women's lives because he worked with and taught young, genteel girls on a regular basis and his observations led him to believe that he honestly had "something to say about them" and he believed that "America's future pivots on this great woman revolution" so he wanted to help young women recognize this fact and act accordingly.[82] The revolution of which Lewis was speaking was the emergence of women into more prominent roles in society such as through public endeavors and matters of women's rights. The idea that fashion was so important in genteel society was somewhat

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[79] Mrs. John Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), 167.
[80] Gregory Stone, "Appearance and the Self," in Mary Ellen Roach and Joanne Bubolz Eicher, eds. Dress, Adornment and the Social Order (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965), 223.
[81] Lewis, Our Girls, 48.
[82] Lewis, Our Girls, 9-10.

foreign to a man of William Sanger's standing, since society respected him for his humanitarian endeavors to help less fortunate people.

In 1899, Veblen published his views on material consumption and the economic circumstances of the middle class in *The Theory of the Leisure Class.* Veblen wrote that a person's status within society was of critical importance. Appearing to have improved one's financial circumstances was more important than actually improving them because appearances were everything and looking wealthy could allow a person to mingle in a higher social class. Veblen also claimed that perception was important. For example, if a middle class person appeared to belong to the upper class based upon how he or she dressed and the items belonging to that person, then the person's perceived status could have been enhanced.[83]

Thorstein Veblen was a leading nineteenth-century economic theorist and social scientist who challenged the prevailing economic assumptions of the day to more adequately and accurately explain the social conditions of his era. Born in Wisconsin in 1857, Veblen was educated at Carleton College in Minnesota. Veblen earned his doctorate at Yale and taught economics first at Stanford University and then at the University of Missouri. Veblen was something of an outsider in the academic world, but he became a legendary thinker and writer. Veblen wrote on an apparent variety of subjects from clothing and culture to war, but the founding concept he used to explain all these subjects was economics. Veblen believed that economics could explain the various behaviors of people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[84]

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[83] Douglas Dowd, Thorstein Veblen (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1964), xi-30; and Max Lerner, ed. The Portable Veblen (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), 1-214.
[84] Dowd, 1-214.

In The Theory of the Leisure Class, Veblen discussed his three main theses on society and culture: economic imitation of the upper class by those in other classes, conspicuous consumption by the wealthy, and, of course, the leisure class itself. According to Veblen, the leisure class consisted of individuals who did not have to perform physical labor and who owned property. This did not mean that the men of the leisure class did not work, but simply that they did not work at menial or highly physical labor such as construction, street cleaning, or factory work. The men of the leisure class were often the owners or upper-level managers in their businesses and therefore did not perform the physical labor. The women of the leisure class, however, were *not* expected to labor. Their role was to wear clothing and jewels that made obvious and conspicuous display of their husbands' wealth and, consequently, to exhibit their family's social and economic status. The bulk and design of the dresses popular in the 1860s through the 1890s, the costly fabrics, and the tight cinching of the required corsets further limited the amount of labor that the women were able to perform and therefore reinforced the idea that they were of the leisure class.[85]

Members of the leisure class also had enough money to allow them free time to enjoy the items they purchased. Those who aspired to or who were in the leisure class, but who were not in the uppermost level, also often emulated or copied the upper crust of society by purchasing similar items or dressing in a similar manner. Finally, those in the leisure class further showed their status through the obvious or conspicuous manner in which they spent their money and the pretentious way in which they lived.[86] Again, perception was key and the only way the leisure class could be perceived as such was to appear to be dressed in a

[85] Dowd, xi-30; and Lerner, 1-214.
[86] Dowd, xi-30; and Lerner, 1-214.

manner that made physical labor almost impossible and to have, or at least use, expensive trappings. By dressing in a manner similar to the leisure class, a person from a lower class could also be perceived as belonging to the exclusive and elite society. Therefore, perception made it possible and tempting for members of other classes to imitate the leisure class.

Veblen's theories about the leisure class and the way in which they were copied are also crucial in understanding the nineteenth-century culture and the way the well-educated citizens and city leaders explained the behavior of people from the lower classes. Veblen asserted that being perceived as a member of the upper-class was primary motive for the behavior of people in lower classes. This also helps explain why people of the nineteenth century were so willing to believe that young women would sell themselves for a fancy silk dress, a newer and better wardrobe, or some jewelry and other fine accoutrements. Since most people were copying those above them socially, and trying to do so in an obvious or conspicuous manner, it was natural for most people to think that the poorest young women would do anything, including sell their bodies, in order to emulate wealthier young women through the purchase of fine dresses and jewels. Women, because of their constantly changing dress and jewelry, were better able to display their status as members of the leisure class. Due to the constricting nature of the late nineteenth-century clothing, women appeared as if they were not able to perform physical labor. Again, perception was critical because there were women who worked while wearing corsets, bustles, or hoop skirts, but when women were dressed in fashionable apparel, they did not look as if they could do much of anything except recline on a fainting couch and be waited upon by servants. The women

wanted to appear wealthy and "rich people must not work, – work is a badge of poverty."[87] Therefore, by their very appearance, women showed their status as women of leisure and, by definition, members of the leisure class.[88]

Etiquette books also emphasized to parents the importance of character to socially differentiate between those of good and bad society. The books stated that sometimes the distinction could not be made visually, but good character would always reveal who were the true members of good society. This implied that people of poor breeding may have looked like the upper-crust, but that they could not imitate what they were not taught: proper behavior and good manners.[89]

Working women also recognized the importance of dressing well. Young women who worked often did not earn a great deal of money as will be shown, but many often felt that a nice outfit was also a good investment. They believed this because when they looked well, they could also attract the attention of men with enough money to take them on dinner dates. The women did not earn enough to eat well and keep a decent roof over their heads, so they looked for ways to supply what they could not afford. The women may not have sold themselves, but their nice outfits allowed them to eat better and even go to amusements that they otherwise could not have afforded.[90]

Poverty

Various nineteenth-century reformist authors, such as Mason Long, explained that poverty was another key reason why many women were lost to lives of prostitution and sin.

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[87] Lewis, Our Girls, 110.
[88] Dowd, xi-30 and Lerner, 1-214.
[89] Sherwood, 13-43.
[90] Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 62-63.

Long stated that "the temptations to vice, which accompany poverty, prove irresistible to many, many thousands of poor girls who are naturally chaste and virtuous, but who are driven by penury, want and starvation," to become prostitutes.[91] Long also confirmed, with regard to the children in poor families, that the girls generally felt the "keen pang of want" more so than the boys because of the desire for decent and fashionable clothing which the family could not provide.[92] Long acknowledged that women often had little other choice because the jobs available to them were generally already filled to capacity and the amount of money a woman could earn was usually not near enough to survive, especially if the woman was supporting children or other family members. In many cases, the young women had "to choose between shame and starvation" and they usually chose shame with the hope that they would be able to eventually rise above the shame and again lead a reputable life.[93]

Mason Long was not the only author of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who pointed out that the difficult choices many poor young women were forced to make often led them astray. Jane Addams also stated that she met many young women in Chicago who were forced to make a "choice between starvation and vice" and again the women usually chose a life of vice rather than starvation and destitution.[94]

Additionally, William Sanger stated that poverty and financial need were indeed common and understandable reasons why women became prostitutes. Sanger obtained his information from research he conducted from 1855 to 1857 in New York City with the assistance of the police department. For his study, Sanger created a schedule of questions that was administered to 2000 prostitutes. Sanger distributed the questionnaire to various

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[91] Long, 136-137.
[92] Long, 137.
[93] Long, 162.
[94] Addams, 49.

police departments since they were the individuals who naturally had contact with the prostitutes and he oversaw the conducting of the interviews. The questionnaire included questions about the women's ages, backgrounds, religions, former occupations, parents, children, and any other relevant information that came up during the interview. The results from the schedules or questionnaires were maintained at Island Hospital on Blackwell's Island in New York, but were destroyed by a fire on February 13, 1858 so no additional analyses of the questionnaires was done. William Sanger published *The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World,* which provided scientific analysis of the questionnaires and traced the history of prostitution in the Western world. The book, however, is clearly a scientific tract with few moral overtones and was based entirely on historic research and data analysis of the surveys.[95] The book was republished in 1897 and again in 1919. The 1897 version included an appendix that presented information on "New York To-day;" written in 1895 by an unnamed contemporary of Dr. Sanger who apparently also had medical knowledge and respected Dr. Sanger enough to remain anonymous so as not to take any of the attention. In the appendix, the other author stated that "chief among these causes [of prostitution], as Dr. Sanger found it in 1858, as we find it to-day, and will, no doubt, find it to the end, is poverty."[96] The fact that the appendix author found poverty to still be the primary cause of prostitution even after almost forty years only verifies the original finding and lends further credence to the idea that poverty and not love of dress was the main reason why women became prostitutes.

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[95] Sanger, 31-34, 450-452.
[96] Sanger, 679.

Thomas Kennard, a St. Louis doctor, presented a paper on prostitution to the St. Louis Medical Society in February 1872, in which he endorsed the Social Evil Ordinance and through it informed the public of what could be done to limit the preponderance of prostitution. In addition to the desire for fashionable apparel, Dr. Kennard revealed that the lack of money was a contributing factor, albeit a small one in his opinion, to the reason why many women became prostitutes. Even though he firmly believed that the love of dress was the ultimate cause of prostitution, he still stated that there were women who were willing to prostitute themselves to earn enough money to survive since they were unable "to earn an honest living, to gratify their tastes, to supply their wants, or, in one word, to make money as males enjoy."[97] By tastes, he meant a woman's desire for fashionable apparel, which he emphatically declared was the true cause of prostitution. This further reveals the extreme cultural bias of the time; people believed that fashion was of the utmost importance since it was verification of the wearer's status within society. These ideas were so firmly entrenched in Kennard's mind that he simply could not accept that poverty was truly the central cause for prostitution despite the fact that he had and discussed evidence to the contrary. Fashion was such an important aspect in the lives of people of the nineteenth century that Kennard could not accept the possibility that anything else was the main cause of prostitution.

Additionally, Kennard suggested that to help the women, St. Louis citizens should "furnish even the humblest parents with the opportunity to give their children a good education, and thus to qualify them for filling lucrative positions when they arrive at the age at which they are most exposed to seductive temptations." Dr. Kennard went on to state that society should encourage the creation of charitable organizations or support those already in

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[97] Kennard, 706.

existence. The organizations then should aid the women who wished to reform because they were "weary of wickedness."[98] He also stated, "We can take the fallen woman by the hand, encourage her in well-doing, and, if possible, assist her in securing a good husband, that she may live happily the rest of her days." Kennard never stated who the potential husbands were or where men could be found who would overlook their fiancées' former status as fallen women, but he seemed certain that these men existed, if only they could be found. Obviously, Kennard was looking at prostitution with significant chauvinist and class biases, but his views were common in the nineteenth-century when women were under the aegis of their fathers and then their husbands. Kennard did not offer any specifics regarding how the reformed women were going to find jobs that actually provided "lucrative" incomes. He acknowledged that poverty was a problem for women, but he did not seem to realize that the available jobs were at fault because they did not pay women well. He simply assumed that there were better jobs available; unfortunately for the women, the better jobs that they found were as prostitutes. Kennard went on to state that "as long as men have the advantage of women in making money . . . so long will a certain number of women, who are unprovided for, sacrifice their virtue to obtain those gratifications which their more favored sisters obtain, in an honorable and virtuous way, by marriage." Overall, Kennard was a bit unrealistic and chauvinistic in his beliefs that a better life was possible for the women if they simply married well or found more "lucrative positions."[99]

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[98] Kennard, 706.
[99] Kennard, 705-719.

Labor and women's wages

The women of the nineteenth century had few legitimate career choices available to them. The most common jobs or career choices included domestic service, teaching, factory work, and of course needlework or sewing related jobs. None of these, however, provided women with decent incomes, as shown by Long who stated, "The factory girls, the clerks, the milliners, the seamstresses, in our great cities have to toil like slaves for the most beggarly wages."[100] The wages women earned were not great, as will be shown, and were generally less than the wages of men for similar jobs. An employer who hired both men and women as bookkeepers admitted that "women can always be hired cheaper than men, as it costs them less to live."[101] This idea was pervasive, but the low wages given women sometimes drove them to seek alternative methods of earning money such as prostitution. In fact, "to wage-earning women, prostitution appeared as a rational choice in a world where few opportunities for a comfortable income offered themselves."[102]

As the nineteenth century progressed, women realized they could do more than simply be wives and mothers and some female reformers advocated more jobs and better wages for women. One such reformer was Virginia Penny who took it upon herself to help other women find good and useful jobs in the late nineteenth century. She acknowledged that poverty was indeed a serious problem for many, but women had a more difficult time with it since they had fewer respectable career choices. In 1863, Miss Penny wrote a book entitled, *Employment of Women: A Cyclopedia of Women's Work* and republished it in 1868

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[100] Long, 169.
[101] Penny, How Women, 107.
[102] Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 104.

and again in 1870, each time with a new title. In 1868 it was titled, *Five Hundred Employments Adapted to Women with the Average Rate of Pay in Each.* In 1870 it was called, *How Women can Make Money, Married or Single, in all Branches of the Arts and Sciences, Professions, Trades, Agricultural and Mechanical Pursuits.* The book was an exhaustive list of potential occupations for women to show them the vast array of jobs available to them so they could "earn a respectable livelihood."[103] In the book(s), Penny listed an assortment of jobs for women, including actresses, yarn manufacturers, amanuenses, lithographers, oyster sellers, hair cloth manufacturers, and hoop skirt manufacturers, to name just a few. In all the listings, Penny included information regarding the wages paid, the effect of the job on a woman's health, the length of time required to successfully learn the job, the length of employment in terms of hours per day or times during the year, especially if the work was seasonal, such as in agricultural pursuits. Penny also warned of the moral dangers associated with some jobs such as actress and stated that even though it was not thought of as one of the more respectable ways to earn a living, the job could pay well and with enough morally upstanding women entering the profession, the public's attitudes about it could change.[104]

Penny intended the book as a "business manual for women"[105] so that they could find jobs that were not already overcrowded with other women and "be kept from despair and sin."[106] Virginia Penny recognized that women were frequently at the mercy of poverty and truly hoped to help other women discover decent employment opportunities that they may not have considered. She also advanced the idea of adequate pay for women in these jobs,

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[103] Penny, How Women, v.
[104] Penny, How Women, 47.
[105] Penny, How Women, v, iii.
[106] Penny, How Women, ix.

but her pleas were overlooked until well into the twentieth century. Virginia Penny was a woman who seemed to have been ahead of her time, voicing ideas that were reiterated by women in the 1970s.

The apparel industry

Women who worked in the fashion industry were generally poorly paid; therefore they often had little recourse but to supplement their meager incomes by working as prostitutes. In 1870, the average weekly earnings of all non-farm employees in the United States were $9.40. By 1875, that figure had dropped to $8.13 per week and in 1880 non-farm workers were earning $7.42 per week. The decrease in average weekly wages may have due in part to the depression of 1873 as well as the increased numbers of immigrants who were willing to work for lower wages in order to remain in America.[107] The weekly averages are for all working individuals both men and women, but women always earned less than men. Therefore women usually earned less than the average weekly wages just mentioned.

When Virginia Penny wrote about the possible jobs for women, she also included information with regard to wages. She documented that in the 1860s, women of New York and New England employed in the boot and shoe industry earned an average monthly salary of $11.25 and those who manufactured clothing earned $12.00 a month. This averages out to between $2.00 and $3.00 a week. By the 1870s, these wages had not drastically improved. Women working in clothing factories could earn from $2.25 to $6.00 a week depending on experience and the policies of the company for which the women worked. Dressmakers earned from $.50 to $4.50 a week stitching clothing products. These calculations included

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[107] US Department of Commerce and US Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 1, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 165.

women who worked in individual houses for families and those employed by dress-making businesses which accounts for the wide and varied range of pay. This figure does not include the women who owned the dressmaker shops. The owners earned substantially more depending upon their charges and the amount they paid their employees. The values also were based on the women's experience and training, so a woman who was an experienced dressmaker would certainly earn more than a young woman just entering the job market. Women employed as sempstresses or seamstresses earned from $.75 to $1.50 per week and again this depended upon the experience of the sewer as well as the number of garments she was able to stitch, since most of these women were actually paid by the piece and the aforementioned values were weekly averages based on the number of items they sewed.[108]

Women employed as clerks in dry goods, fancy goods, or variety stores also were not paid well, although they generally did earn more than women in manufacturing. Saleswomen earned on average from $3.00 to $8.00 per week, however this did not include room or board as it would have in England, since few of these women lived with their families or in factory boarding houses.[109]

Women in other industries also did not earn great amounts of money although, depending upon the job and training required, some did pay better than other jobs. Amanuenses for example could earn a salary of $600, but the actual salary was dependent upon the woman's education, experience, and ability. Amanuenses were women who took dictation or who copied material as required by their employers. These women had to have a certain amount of education and they usually worked out an agreement with their employers

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[108] Penny, How Women, 110-111, 125-128, 181-184, 309, 324-333.
[109] Penny, How Women, 110-111, 125-128, 181-184, 309, 324-333.

determining the duties, length of employment, and salary. Amanuenses were also at the top of the working woman's hierarchy.[110] Female bookkeepers could earn a bit more than factory workers or salesclerks, but the job required education, as did work as an amanuensis. Bookkeepers in New York could earn a wide range of salaries depending upon their experience and training. The yearly salaries ranged from $250 to $2500. However, bookkeeping required a good understanding of mathematics therefore it was only suitable for women better educated, middle-class, young women.[111]

Women in the nineteenth century could work in a variety of factory jobs, but they earned much less than the better class jobs of amanuenses or bookkeepers. For example, women who worked in pin factories earned from $3.25 to $3.75 a week depending upon their training. The work of these women usually involved tending the machines, making paper boxes for the pins, or sticking and packing the pins. Some of the work was also done by the piece, and a woman could earn from $14 to $21 a month depending on how skillful she may have been.[112] Women also could work in parasol or umbrella factories. These women earned from $2 to $6 per week. Usually, parasol work paid better than umbrella work and both types were seasonal. Parasols were usually made in the spring and used as sunshades, whereas umbrellas were made in the fall and used to protect women from rain or snow. The same women who made parasols also made umbrellas, but they earned $5 to $6 a week when making parasols and only $2 to $4 a week when making umbrellas.[113] Underwear manufacture was another industry in which women were employed. Women who worked to manufacture ladies' undergarments often earned from $3 to $6 per week, but the women who

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[110] Penny, How Women, 1.
[111] Penny, How Women, 106-107; Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 133-136.
[112] Penny, How Women, 220-221.
[113] Penny, How Women, 305-308.

earned the greater amount had "considerable experience" and also added embroidery to their work.[114]

The fur industry was well established in St. Louis and women could have been employed in various aspects of fur manufacture. For example, women who worked as fur dyers could have earned $4 to $6 a week. This type of job was "wet and dirty work, and the odor is very disagreeable."[115] This would not have been a job to which many women would have aspired, but it paid a weekly wage similar to some of the other manufacturing jobs and better than some of the dressmaking positions.[116] Gutta percha was another manufacturing industry in which women could have been employed. Gutta percha was a rubber like substance used in the manufacture of various small items such as jewelry, buttons or to close seams on clothing. Women working in gutta percha manufacturing firms could earn form $2 to $4 a week, again depending upon the young woman's skills and training.[117]

Actresses were another group of women who may have earned a decent income, but these women were not necessarily always well respected. Women working for an acting company earned from $3 to $150 per week depending upon their duties and abilities. The better known or more accomplished actresses earned the most, whereas the women who worked behind the scenes or in bit parts earned much less.[118] Fortune telling was another occupation that was not of the highest moral caliber. Fortune tellers could earn from 25 cents to $5 for a reading. This could have added up to a decent amount if enough readings were done in a week. Fortune telling was not a highly endorsed occupation because fortune tellers

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[114] Penny, How Women, 329-330.
[115] Penny, How Women, 312.
[116] Penny, How Women, 312-313.
[117] Penny, How Women, 277.
[118] Penny, How Women, 47-49.

were considered of a questionable moral and religious character. In fact, Virginia Penny stated that "Many a fortune teller sells her soul to Satan for the power of imposing the belief that she reveals future events." This was not an admirable occupation, but it was still included in Penny's work on 500 potential occupations for women.[119]

The aforementioned jobs reveal that women who worked as dressmakers, milliners, or salesclerks were earning less than some of the more reputable careers of bookkeeper or amanuensis, and also less than other occupations, such as actress. However, women in most apparel-related jobs earned a wage in keeping with other possible female-dominated jobs of the period. In 1889, the US Commissioner of Labor issued a report on the labor conditions of working women in twenty-two cities throughout America. The report included a section reporting the average weekly incomes for women in each city. The average earnings for female workers in St. Louis were $5.19 per week. The average for all the cities was $5.24 per week, so St. Louis was just below the average weekly wage. The jobs in the calculation included a variety of factory work from artificial flower makers to yeast factory workers. The jobs also included corset factory workers, dressmakers, dry-goods store workers, hat factory workers, and milliners. The women in St. Louis were also earning less than the average weekly wage of $9.06 for all non-farm employees in 1889. This is understandable, since the latter figure includes men in the average and men always earned more than women in the nineteenth century.[120]

The places where many of the boot or shoe factories, and other clothing related businesses such as tailors were located just happened to have been in the same

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[119] Penny, How Women, 415.
[120] US Department of Labor, 68, 524-529; and US Department of Commerce, 165.

neighborhoods as prostitutes. The census records of 1870, for example, reveal that many self-proclaimed prostitutes lived near individuals who were shoe or boot makers as well as tailors and some seamstresses. In the 1870s, wage-earners seldom lived great distances from their jobs, since they did not have public transportation or automobiles to easily and quickly transport them to work. Since the prostitutes also lived near various clothing manufacturing workers it strongly suggests that they lived near the factories as well. This implied that some of the female workers in those factories probably saw the prostitutes and knew about them. While the census records do not definitively prove this, the fact remains that there were prostitutes living near the clothing manufacturing facilities. Furthermore, some men who worked in the various factories and other industries in the area were probably customers of those prostitutes. The census records also do not prove this, but the prostitutes would not have set-up their houses in areas where there was no possibility of business.[121]

Exact figures for how much prostitutes actually earned in St. Louis was unavailable, but they probably made considerably more money than by doing the more respectable jobs.[122] The amount of money earned by the prostitutes in Sanger's study in 1858 was calculated to have been between ten and fifty dollars per week. Even though these figures are from the 1850s, it is not unreasonable to surmise that prostitutes in St. Louis were earning at least as much almost twenty years later. The amount earned by prostitutes in the late 1850s was also considerably more than the average amounts earned by factory workers, sales

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[121] Population census tracts, St. Louis, Missouri, 1870.
[122] Katherine T. Corbett, In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Press, 1999), 125.

clerks, or seamstresses in the 1870s.[123] Obviously, prostitution was financially advantageous to the poor women of nineteenth-century America.

The women working in the textile factories, undergarment manufacturers, or umbrella and parasol manufacturers, as well as women working as seamstresses did not earn a great deal. Additionally, they had normal expenses that included room, board, and clothing. The reality was that most women were not able to easily survive on their meager wages.[124] This was further substantiated by the story of Jessie, a patient of Dr. Dio Lewis. Jessie was a young lady who turned to prostitution when she could no longer support herself on her meager wages of three dollars a week that she earned as a store clerk. She told Dr. Lewis that she had to pay for her food and room on her income and she "managed to live as long as my clothes held out; then I began to suffer for the necessaries of life." However, her shoes wore out and she needed a new pair so she "went without food for two days that I might buy a pair of shoes."[125] Eventually, Jessie became a prostitute because she simply could not survive on her earnings from the store. This further shows that women had a difficult time living on the small incomes provided by their jobs and that their expenses often exceeded their incomes.

In surveying prostitutes, William Sanger asked them what trade they had prior to becoming prostitutes. Of 2000 respondents, 419 stated they were previously involved in apparel industry jobs such as dressmaker, seamstress, milliner, or umbrella-maker. This only made up about 21% of the total women who responded.[126] The number was not great and it

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[123] Sanger, 601.
[124] Eleanor Gilbert, The Ambitious Woman in Business, 2nd ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Co., 1916), 161-166.
[125] Lewis, Chastity, 295-297.
[126] Sanger, 524.

was just slightly more than the number of dressmakers and milliners in St. Louis who became prostitutes. Dressmaking, millinery, and sewing may not have led most women into prostitution, as was commonly believed at the time, but there were at least some women who became prostitutes after working in fashion-related jobs.[127] The only area of employment that resulted in more women becoming prostitutes was domestic service. These women were also poorly paid, were continuously on call day and night, and were sometimes taken advantage of by their male employers. For these reasons, women did not aspire to domestic service, and frequently left for alternative employment which did include prostitution if the women were not trained in any other sort of employment or if the women left in shame due to an unfortunate incident.[128]

The women working in the needle trades and apparel industry had to completely support themselves on their meager earnings, unlike live-in servants. This included paying for rent, food, clothing and anything else such as medicine or doctor's visits. These difficulties were compounded by the fact that they daily saw women who were so much better off and sometimes, on their way home, they encountered "the frail of her own sex, bedecked in finery, with countenances beaming from the effects of their potations, and the thought flash[ed] across her mind, 'They are better off than I am.'" This belief was "too often but the precursor of her own ruin."[129]

Female clerks in stores that sold the textiles, notions, accessories, or ready-made clothing such as undergarments or cloaks also encountered similar problems, exaggerated by

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[127] Wendy Gamber, The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930 (Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1997), 17-18, 73-74.
[128] Sanger, 524; and Alice Kessler-Harris, Women Have Always Worked: A Historical Overview (New York: The McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 80-83.
[129] Sanger, 524-28.

the fact that they always had to appear presentable and well dressed in order to adequately sell the items. However, they were not paid well enough to dress in a manner consistent with their job requirements. This point was explicitly expressed by Dio Lewis who related a story told him by the daughter of one of his close acquaintances. He said the girl had asked his advice on obtaining a job, since her father had recently passed away and she needed money, but did not have time to prepare for a particular profession. Lewis suggested that she try for a job at a local dry-goods store in the Boston area. The girl applied at the store and was granted an interview with the owner, who offered her a position. She was told her wage was to be three dollars a week, but she would earn up to six dollars a week after she had been there a while. The young woman then asked how she was supposed to feed herself and dress as the other girls did when her board alone cost her six dollars a week. The owner told her, "You must get some good gentlemen friend to dress you," since she obviously could not dress appropriately on what he was going to pay her.[130] Furthermore, he certainly was not going to pay her significantly more because there were always more girls willing to work for the same wages if she was not.[131]

This was not an isolated incident that only occurred to one or even a few young women. This procedure was so prevalent in the late nineteenth century that William Sydney Porter, better known as O. Henry, based his short story *An Unfinished Story* on it. The tale was set in New York and began with a brief introduction of the narrator in heaven defending himself, but his chronicle was interrupted with the tale of Dulcie, the young woman whose story was unfinished. Dulcie was a clerk in a store and earned six dollars a week. She made

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[130] Lewis, Chastity, 223.
[131] Lewis, Chastity, 222-225.

a date with Piggy, a man with whom many of the young clerks went to dinner in order to help stretch their meager incomes. On her way home, Dulcie purchased an imitation lace collar with the last fifty cents left from her week's wages. Her expenses were not extravagant and only included her small room as well as modest meals and a daily newspaper. This did not include the cost of clothing that was necessary for her job as a clerk in the department store, but she simply could not afford more than the occasional imitation lace collar to replace an old or soiled one. She was trying to save twenty cents a week in order to purchase a new "blue pongee suit," but the story revealed that it would probably take years for her to save enough money. However, there was a second hand store where she may have been able to purchase a nice suit in less time.[132]

Dulcie prepared for her date with Piggy, but instead refused to go with him on that night. She kept a framed picture of a man whom she greatly admired on her bureau and upon looking at the picture and thinking about how he represented her ideal, gallant gentleman she simply could not go out with Piggy, at least not on that particular night. Instead of the grand meal she originally expected, Dulcie ate a light snack of crackers and jam. The story ended soon after that with Dulcie going to bed, but as the title implied the story was unfinished because the reader was left with the idea that eventually Dulcie would have to accept Piggy's invitation. The implication was that Piggy's invitation included more than just dinner. O. Henry finished the story by going back to the narrator's tale of being judged in heaven. When asked by an angel if he was with a group of nearby men, the narrator asked who the men were. He was told they were store managers who hired young women and then only

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[132] Bennett A. Cerf and Van H. Cartmell, selectors, "An Unfinished Story," in The Best Short Stories of O. Henry (New York: The Modern Library, 1945), 51-58.

paid them five or six dollars a week. Upon hearing that, the narrator emphatically replied, "Not on your immortality . . . I'm only a fellow that set fire to an orphan asylum, and murdered a blind man for his pennies." This was a strong condemnation of the men who ran stores such as the one in which Dulcie worked. O. Henry felt that men such as these were worse than murderers because they were more underhanded in their wickedness since they essentially forced their female clerks into a life of sin with men such as Piggy in order to survive. The dates obviously were only part of what the women surrendered to the men for food and other unmentioned, but implied forms of assistance.[133]

Fiction was a good reflection of actual conditions going on during the time period in which they were written, even though the stories did not relate actual events. The stories such as the one just described or another titled *Caroline Tracy; The Spring Street Milliner's Apprentice* provide additional insight to later readers and researchers into the lifestyles and social conditions of the period. In *The Milliner's Apprentice*, a young woman named Caroline Tracy answered a milliner's advertisement for an apprentice. The milliner's shop was actually a front used to recruit young women into prostitution. Caroline was rescued by the end of the tale and did not become a prostitute, but the idea of using a milliner's or dressmaker's shop for a front for prostitution was common and genuine.[134]

In St. Louis, the practice of using a dressmaker's shop sign as a front for an assignation house or as a way to lure desperate girls into the profession was recognized. In 1874, Lieutenant Governor Johnson relayed the story of a young woman who answered an advertisement for a "sewing girl" she found in a local newspaper. She went to the business

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[133] Cerf and Cartmell, 51-58.

[134] "Caroline Tracy; The Spring Street Milliner's Apprentice, or Life in New York in 1847-1848, Being the Narrative of Actual Occurrences which came to the Knowledge of a Young Physician of New York City" (New York: Stearns and Co., 1849),17-78.

and met "an oily-tongued, matronly-looking woman" who gave the girl the job. She encountered several other girls in the house after she moved in, but she was told they were the woman's daughters. Since the girl had been living in the house several days, "she was informed by her employer that it was necessary to report at the police office all girls hiring to labor of any kind" so the girl went to the police department and registered. The girl told her Mom about her new sewing job and her Mother "knew full well the significance of the act;" her daughter was a registered prostitute. The girl did not return to the business and her name was removed from the register.[135] This story reveals that even though the *Milliner's Apprentice* was a fictional tale it was reflective of actual incidents that occurred throughout the country in the nineteenth century.

Dacus and Buel also wrote about the use of dressmaking establishments as fronts for prostitution in their 1878 book that examined all aspects of life in the city. The authors related that a dressmaker's or tailor's shop sign was often placed above one door of an assignation house so the women and their clients could more easily and more freely enter the house (Figure 1). The other door had a different sign, such as for a boarding house, so the women were able to enter under one sign and the men entered under the other sign without those on the street being any the wiser as to what was really going on inside the building.[136]

The use of dressmaker's shops as a front for brothels or assignation houses was also prevalent in New Orleans, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. A local newspaper, *The Mascot,* written for the people in the French quarter who led a less restrictive lifestyle, printed several stories revealing the use of dressmakers' shops as fronts for brothels.[137] A

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[135] Johnson, 21.
[136] Dacus and Buel, 456-457.
[137] *The Mascot*, 1889.

dressmaker's shop was a common front because it was normal to see women coming and going from such establishments and therefore unknowing outsiders would not question the frequent comings and goings of multiple women. Furthermore, dressmaker's shops were common businesses for women as were boarding houses or laundries, but women entering a laundry should have carried a load into the business and a woman known to have been a resident of the town would not have regularly entered a boarding house if she was living elsewhere. However, women frequently could have come and gone from a dressmaker's shop without any question and without having to carry any parcel.[138]

Josie Washburn, the reformed Nebraska prostitute, also described young women from the apparel industry becoming prostitutes. Young women who worked in dry goods or fancy goods stores were especially vulnerable to prostitution because they were exposed to "all kinds of temptations" in the form of fine textiles, accessories, or some garments such as cloaks or undergarments. The temptations also came from male co-workers and customers who may claim love in order to compromise the young woman. For these reasons, it was easy for Washburn to understand that these women often became prostitutes because they were poorly paid, yet exposed to fine apparel and were required to appear presentable. These women often had un-chaperoned dealings with a variety of men, who may not have always been looking to purchase anything from the store. In many of these instances, the temptation was simply too much and the wages were too low for the women to resist turning to prostitution.[139]

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[138] Gamber, 18.
[139] Washburn, 151-157.

Additionally, according to Washburn, the young women who were former store clerks from "fashionable stores," as well as teachers, governesses, and office clerks, often made up the upper-level of the prostitution hierarchy. These women were better able to retain their "modesty" and were accustomed to dealing with business and society men; therefore, they attracted better paying customers to the assignation house.[140] Washburn acknowledged that women who came into the underworld were usually poor and in need of assistance they simply could not get from anywhere else. Washburn relayed her own experiences explaining that the women of the demimonde were quite generous and willing to help each other pay for routine expenditures such as doctor bills, medical care, and even funeral expenses. The assistance the women obtained from each other was often the only help they received since members of polite society generally ignored the women or simply did not seem to care about them.[141]

PROSTITUTES AND GENTEEL WOMEN'S IMPACT ON EACH OTHER

This final section investigates the impact, if any, that the prostitutes and genteel women had on each other's fashions. It also reveals whether any specific clothing held a particular meaning for the prostitutes or the genteel women. If that were true, then I attempted to discover what that meaning may have been and if any style or type of clothing was used to identify either group of women.

There simply was no evidence that the prostitutes and genteel women actually affected each other's fashion choices in St. Louis. Both groups were at least aware of what was being advertised in the local newspapers and both had access to the local retail and dry

[140] Washburn, 106-107.
[141] Washburn, 131-134.

goods stores. There is evidence that at least some of the prostitutes read the local newspapers since their letters, or letters that seemed to be from "soiled doves", occasionally, appeared in the editorial sections. In one instance, there was an ongoing debate between "Soiled Dove" and "Sphinx" regarding how to best help and reform the women. The letter from "Soiled Dove" appeared following the letter from "Cora Pearl," previously quoted in Chapter 4. "Soiled Dove" wrote in part:

> I would like to see an effort made for the crushed women to whose very existence a legislative act is necessary. It seems to be the opinion of those who control us that when they passed a law granting to us the privilege of living, and when they stigmatized us by an opprobrious name, and provided for us a hospital, at the thought of entering which every sensitive feeling we have left revolts, they had placed us in a position which we cannot otherwise than enjoy. . . Not a movement has been made to reclaim us; not an effort is made to assist us when we struggle with the cords that tie us down; the mantle of charity is too scant to cover our sins; we have a law to govern us, that is all, and in the wisdom of those who look down upon us with folded arms and closed lips, that is enough.[142]

For "Soiled Dove," the ordinance was bad, but the lack of actual assistance was worse. "Sphinx," a man from the community whose actual identity also was never revealed, responded to "Dove's" letter with a rather brutal condemnation. In part of his letter, "Sphinx" wrote:

> Let the object be to instruct them in the physical, mental and moral laws that govern them to show them not only the injury they are doing themselves, but the utter uselessness, the contemptible worthlessness of their lives; to ridicule them for remaining in a condition of slavery and degradation that so-called brutes know nothing of. It is folly to extend sympathy to such as Cora and Dove – that they remain what they are is their own fault.[143]

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[142] The St. Louis Daily Globe, "The Sunday Growler," December 28, 1873, p. 2.
[143] The St. Louis Daily Globe, "The Sunday Growler", January 4, 1874, p. 3.

This was harsh and "Soiled Dove" responded by saying that she had simply asked for assistance for herself and her "sisters," but that all she got in return was "a rough hand . . . thrust across my mouth." She concluded with, "I am licensed, as the dogs are, and I suppose that civilization has, in that, expended all its efforts upon me."[144] Following this, "Sphinx" backed off with his condemnation and stated that "Soiled Dove" had "misunderstood" him and he only "meant to convey the idea that she was in no special need of mere sympathy, which scarcely ever brings about any permanent, practical good. She needs . . . a helping hand."[145] The debate continued for a few more weeks with neither really backing down.

Eventually, the *Globe* had "Soiled Dove" write an article expressing her opinion of the end of the Ordinance. She was pleased the Ordinance had been repealed as she expressed when she said, "Perhaps there is some hope that the future may hold something of brightness for us."[146]

Based on the previous statements, prostitutes did at least look at the newspapers although some of the language used by "Soiled Dove" was not what would be expected from a prostitute; the use of the word "opprobrious" was unexpected. The genteel women also had access to the local newspapers and must have read them. The local department stores advertised their wares in the newspapers and periodically the papers also featured fashion columns. The papers would not have done this if they did not expect women to read their papers. There were at least three women who also wrote in to comment on the debate between "Soiled Dove" and "Sphinx." They expressed sympathy for women such as "Dove" and suggested that the women needed and deserved help.

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[144] The St. Louis Daily Globe, "The Sunday Growler", January 11, 1874, p. 3.
[145] The St. Louis Daily Globe, "The Sunday Growler", January 18, 1874, p.3.
[146] The St. Louis Daily Globe, "Soiled Dove", March 29, 1874, p. 3.

There was no evidence, however, that either group drastically influenced the apparel of the other. Obviously, they knew of each other's existence and the genteel women expressed sympathy for the prostitutes, but nothing remains to prove that either group affected the other with regard to appearance. Nevertheless, it would be logical to assume that if a particular style or color was known to have been worn by madams or prostitutes, the genteel women probably would not have wanted to have been seen in a similar style or color. Most women of the nineteenth-century tried to appear socially acceptable and fashionable by dressing in a manner in keeping with the styles of the era. Some women who worked in the various charities or religious orders regularly encountered the prostitutes and saw how they dressed, but these women were not as likely to be influenced by the prostitutes' apparel choices since many of them wore the clothing of their religious order.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

One of the chief obstacles in the way of woman's elevation to the same platform of human rights, and moral dignity, and intellectual improvement, with her brother, on which God placed her . . . is her love of dress.

-----Sarah Moore Grimké (1792-1873)[1]

Sarah Grimké was a social reformer of the nineteenth century who championed the cause of antislavery and, after the Civil War, spoke out on behalf of women's rights. She acknowledged that fashion, or the love of dress, was primarily responsible for why women were not socially equal to men.[2] Fashion was a powerful force in the nineteenth century with regard to women. However, fashion alone was not responsible for the multitude of problems experienced by women, even though that was the commonly held belief of the time. Fashion also included the fashion industry and it was the industry that was more responsible for one of the main problems nineteenth-century women experienced, poverty. By extension, poverty was one of the main reasons why women often did desperate, even unthinkable, things such as prostitution to survive. In fact, contrary to popular nineteenth century opinions, the desire for fashion generally did not drive women into prostitution. The poor pay received by most female workers in the late nineteenth century, the need for decent

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[1] Tobi Tobias, Obsessed by Dress (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 126.
[2] Page Smith, Daughters of the Promised Land: Women in American History (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 104-105.

clothing, a place to live, and food were actually more often what drove women into prostitution.[3]

The fashion industry in St. Louis was like any other large-scale business in that it aided the city's growth and expansion with a resultant influx of people and money. However, the industry also had a dark side that was often ignored by those profiting from the business. The manufacturing part of the fashion industry included fiber and textile manufacturers as well as undergarment, accessory, and shirt manufacturers. The manufacturing industry required vast numbers of workers to create and sell the fashions and many of these workers were women, but they were not paid well. Women were paid significantly less than men, a fact that Sarah Grimké attributed to women's "love of dress." A woman working in a clothing factory may have earned from $2.00 to $6.00 per week and seamstresses or dressmakers made as little as $.50 to $4.50 a week. This shows that these women were not earning great amounts of money and the amounts were usually below the average of $5.19 per week for the women of St. Louis. Out of these paltry amounts, they still had to pay for rent and food as well as clothing and any other necessary expenses such as medical bills. Obviously, the women who worked in apparel manufacturing were close to, if not below, the level of poverty. The employees' inadequate wages were made worse by the fact that those in apparel factories were constantly exposed to fashions or textiles they may have needed or simply wanted, but that they could not afford. This fact worked toward validating the belief that women willingly sold themselves for the fashions they needed or desired. Additionally, many of the people who worked in St. Louis' apparel manufacturing

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[3] Wendy Gamber, The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930 (Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1997), 17-18, 73-74; and Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 104.

industries also happened to live in the same neighborhoods as some of the prostitutes. This further suggests that women who worked in apparel manufacturing encountered prostitutes and even may have been part-time prostitutes in order to supplement their meager incomes.[4]

The situation was not better for the women who worked in the retail arena of the fashion business. Young women were also often employed as clerks in dry goods and other retail establishments of the nineteenth century, but they too did not earn a great deal of money. For example, a female store clerk earned between $3.00 and $8.00 a week depending on her experience and the store in which she was employed. This was more than the women who worked on the production side of the textile and apparel industries, but these women also needed better quality and greater variety of clothes for their jobs. Additionally, these women were a reflection of the dressmaker establishments or dry-goods stores in which they worked; and they were required to dress well enough to associate with the genteel ladies who were the stores' clients.[5] This too led some women workers into poverty, since they had to pay for their food and rent as well as their required clothing. Sometimes women who worked as sales clerks were even advised to find a male friend who could supply them with the nice clothing items they needed, but could not otherwise afford. The managers were essentially telling their female employees to become kept women or part-time prostitutes, but the managers certainly were not so explicit in their suggestions. This also reinforced the idea that an excessive love of dress drove women into prostitution, since the women were advised to prostitute themselves for appropriate, fashionable clothing.[6]

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[4] Virginia Penny, How Women can Make Money, Married or Single, in all Branches of the Arts and Sciences, Professions, Trades, Agricultural and Mechanical Pursuits (Springfield, MA: D. E. Fisk and Co., 1870; reprinted New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1971), 110-111, 125-128, 181-184, 278, 309, 324-333.
[5] Gamber, 74
[6] Dr. Dio Lewis, Chastity: Or Our Secret Sins (New York: Clarke Brothers, 1874), 222-225.

In St. Louis in 1870 there were 15,736 women "engaged in all classes of occupations" within the total female population. Combined, dressmakers and milliners made up only 1.55% of the total women engaged in all occupations. This was less than the proportion of dressmakers and milliners within the entire population of working women in Missouri. In 1870, there were 38,711 wage-earning women in Missouri and of those 1,714 or 4.43% were "milliners, dress and mantua makers." However, 10.7% of the registered prostitutes were former dressmakers or milliners. The proportion of dressmakers and milliners among the prostitutes was much greater than the proportion in the total number of working women and substantially more than the .16% of dressmakers and milliners within the total female population.[7]

Regardless of which area of the apparel industry in which the women worked, they were not paid well enough to survive, let alone thrive. These women also did not have any alternative respectable careers, for which they were qualified, that provided significantly more in terms of wages. Therefore, in order to supplement their incomes, many women turned to prostitution, either full- or part-time. However, the people of the Gilded Age believed that women became prostitutes simply because they desired clothes that they could not otherwise afford. This was true to a certain extent, but it was only one small part of the whole picture. The women were not able to purchase the clothes they needed because they were poor and not because they valued clothes more than themselves. Granted, the women

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[7] David B. Gould, ed., Gould and Aldrich's Directory, for 1872, (St. Louis, MO: David B. Gould, Publishers, 1872) I: 998-1000, 1046-1047; Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of Census, Ninth Census, Volume I: The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations, to which are added The Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Pauperism and Crime, and of Areas, Families, and Dwellings, Compiled, from the Original returns of the Ninth Census, June 1, 1870, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 682-695.

of the Gilded Age wanted nice clothes and understood the importance of fashion, but they were not so obsessed with fashion that they willingly sold themselves for a pretty dress. However, people of the period often overlooked the fact that the prostitutes were not able to earn enough money to survive in any other so-called respectable occupations. Therefore, they had to prostitute themselves to obtain the basics of life; food, shelter and, of course, clothing.

Additionally, during times of economic depressions such as from 1873 to 1877 and 1893 to 1897, the number of prostitutes in many cities increased due to the corresponding increase in the number of people living in poverty. This is further evidence that poverty and not an excessive love of fashion was at the heart of the reason why women became prostitutes. As Thorstein Veblen asserted, economics were the main reason behind the actions of most people in the nineteenth century and this further explained the women's reasons for becoming prostitutes. Even people of the time, such as Jane Addams or Dr. Dio Lewis, admitted that poverty contributed to prostitution. Despite evidence to the contrary that they personally encountered, these people and many others still believed that fashion, not poverty, was the true cause of prostitution. However, the desire for fashion did not cause prostitution, but the fine attire worn by the prostitutes was the most visible result and caused many people to believe that a woman's natural desire for fashionable apparel caused her to prostitute herself.

What the prostitutes were actually wearing also was not as important as how they were perceived by those around them. Perception had greater importance than the actual fashions because perception included evaluations about the women's outfits as well as the way they wore the clothes and how they behaved. Perception was an important aspect of

fashion since, as stated, women tried to dress above their actual status so they could be perceived as members of a better social class. This was further evidence of the importance of fashion and also was the crux of the problem. People feared that poor, young girls sold themselves to dress above their station. In reality, most young women who became prostitutes did not do it because of fashion, but because they were poor. However, once they entered the profession, they dressed fashionably because they could finally afford to do so. Moreover, the madams and upper-level prostitutes usually had significant disposable incomes and were therefore able to purchase fashionable clothing. Prostitutes' lives were challenging and they made difficult, usually irreversible decisions, but the choices were made for practical, not vain reasons. However, people of the Gilded Age never downplayed the importance of fashion because clothing really was the most obvious way in which people declared their social status. For people of the nineteenth century, appearances and perception were vital factors in their lives. Furthermore, the people of the Gilded Age did not want to accept the blame for why women were forced to go into prostitution. If the good citizens of the time acknowledged that poverty resulted in prostitution, then they had to do something to actually correct the problem. However, if the people blamed the women's own desire for fashionable clothing, then only the prostitutes themselves were responsible for their actions; and they were the ones who had to save themselves from prostitution.

Since St. Louis had a burgeoning red-light district and a resultant problem with venereal diseases, the city council decided the best way to solve both problems was to essentially legalize prostitution with the passage of the Social Evil Ordinance. The Ordinance only lasted from 1870 to 1874 when it was nullified by the state. It also impacted the prostitutes' lives because they had to register with the police and undergo regular medical

inspections. Once the women were registered, they were officially known as prostitutes until they either quit the business and requested removal from the roster, left town, or died. Even though the law resulted in the building of the Social Evil Hospital and House of Industry, the Ordinance did not really help the women nor did it halt the spread of venereal diseases in St. Louis. The only thing the Ordinance accomplished was to put a black mark on the otherwise bright future St. Louis City Leaders had been trying to create. The Ordinance did give the prostitutes a small sense that they were accepted, but that feeling was short-lived and the newspapers revealed that the women wanted help, not medical exams and registration rules. However, the prostitutes simply did not receive any real assistance from the Social Evil Hospital, the House of Industry, the Ordinance, or the community. The Social Evil Ordinance also revealed that, in reality, women became prostitutes primarily because they were destitute and could not find a more respectable way to supplement their incomes.

Prostitution and prostitutes were regarded and dealt with in different ways throughout the United States. In St. Louis, prostitution was the primary focus of politicians, lawmen, and later historians. However, the prostitutes themselves were secondary to the matter of prostitution, and none of the women's names have been remembered or recorded for history. By contrast, in the West, the madams and prostitutes were the primary interest to men of the time and later historians. Women such as Julia Bulette of Virginia City, Nevada; Mattie Silks and Jennie Rogers of Denver, "Chicago Joe" Hensley of Helena, Montana; and Lola Montez of San Francisco have all been remembered and are still known to researchers. These women were madams, but they also were businesswomen who literally made a name for themselves as a result of the aid they gave their towns during times of need. However, the women of St. Louis have been forgotten; and only the Social Evil Ordinance is still

known to researchers. This shows that the law and how the citizens of St. Louis dealt with prostitution were important in Missouri; whereas in the West the madams and how they survived were recognized as important to the citizens and towns in which they lived.[8]

This research is important because I investigated a usually overlooked group in women's history, prostitutes. I also analyzed the negative impact that fashion had on women in the nineteenth century. General histories tend to overlook women's roles in history and women's history tends to ignore the importance of fashion in women's lives, but these views are shortsighted on the part of any serious student of history. Therefore, this study was an attempt to fill in the gaps with regard to the history of both fashion and women. The reason I chose prostitutes was because they have rarely been seriously studied with regard to how fashion influenced their choices and the potential impact, positive or negative, that fashion and the apparel industry had on their lives. Women in clothing manufacturing and retail businesses were susceptible to prostitution because they were so poorly paid while sometimes being exposed to the most fashionable textile and apparel items.

Fashion was so important in the lives of nineteenth-century people that they actually believed the desire for fashionable apparel caused women to become prostitutes. In reality, just the desire for fashion did not cause women to become prostitutes. Nevertheless, this belief was firmly entrenched in the minds of most people of the Gilded Age. Both men and women, scientists and reformers, truly believed this despite scientific evidence to the contrary. Prostitution has always existed and probably always will because, at the end of the day, the one thing a woman is born with, that she has complete control over, is her own body.

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[8] Jennifer Schulle, "The Madams of Denver's Market Street: Their Clothing and Their Lives" (M. A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1996); and Anne Seagraves, Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West (Hayden, ID: Wesanne Publications, 1996), 32-33, 39-41, 61-62, and 86-90.

When a woman has nothing else, she can and often does sell her body simply to survive. This is an ongoing circumstance in all societies and will continue to be so as long as women, men, and money exist. In the nineteenth century, fashion was a double edged sword in that women generally wanted to dress well, but this simply was not possible on the meager wages working women earned. Therefore, some women turned to prostitution in order to supply their basic needs as well as their fashion related wants despite their poverty. However, women did not become prostitutes simply to satisfy a love of dress as was commonly believed. Poverty, not fashion, was the main reason why most women fell from grace in the late nineteenth century.

APPENDIX

THE ORIGINAL AND REVISED SOCIAL EVIL ORDINANCES

Following is the content of the original Social Evil Ordinance as it appeared in the *Missouri Republican* on July 12, 1870. The Ordinance passed on July 9, 1870 with a vote of sixteen in favor and five against.

AN ORDINANCE TO REGULATE AND SUPPRESS HOUSES OF ILL-FAME.

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of St. Louis:

SECTION 1. The board of police commissioners are hereby required to make as full and complete a list and record of all bawdy houses, houses of ill-fame, and of assignation and of all bawds, courtezans, and prostitutes within the City of St. Louis as possible, and to furnish such list to the board of health, and from time to time furnish such additional and supplemental lists as shall show full the facts herein required. This list shall show the names of all persons keeping the same, the ownership of the houses, the locality, the names and aliases, ages and former occupations of the person and prostitute living therein together with such other parties are as may be of statistical or sanitary interest; such record shall be kept in the office of the clerk of the board of health but shall be open to inspection only to members of said board and the board of police commissioners and the members of the City Council.

SEC. 2. Each person keeping any such place or house of ill-fame shall be required forthwith to give full and complete information to said board and its

proper agents of the particulars stated in section one, and also of any change that may take place in its ownership, charge or control, or in respect to any of its inmates and any person fulfilling or refusing when requested or required to furnish such information, or to comply with those requirements shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

SEC. 3. The said board of health shall divide the city into districts and for each district appoint a regular physician whose duty it shall be to visit at least once a week each of the houses of ill-fame and rooms used or occupied by prostitutes located in his district. A list of these, together with a list of all prostitutes and their places of living, shall be furnished to him by the board of health for his sole use and inspection. Such physician shall there carefully inquire into the sanitary condition of the prostitutes, and if necessary subject them to an examination; shall make all necessary orders and file all proper direction for their sanitary managements. He may order the removal of any of the inmates to the hospital, and in any case where there is danger of infections, he shall order such removal or such action as shall remove such danger. He shall furnish weekly a full report of his action, and of the condition of all such houses and their inmates, to said board of health. The keeper, or person in charge of every such house or room, shall pay to such physician the sum of one dollar for each such inmate, weekly, which money shall be delivered to the clerk of the board of health, subject to the order of said board. Any person violating or disobeying the order of such physician, or obstructing, hindering or preventing him from discharging his duties as hearing prescribed, shall be

deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and be fined not less than twenty dollars, provided that any person may, within three days, in writing, after its issued, appeal from any order of said physician to the board of health , which shall thereupon grant a hearing to such person, and its action thereupon shall be final in the premises, and disobedience of any order therein made be punishable as in this section provided.

SEC. 4. The board of police commissioners, upon request of the board of health, shall have the power to suppress any house of ill-fame within any locality they may from time to time designate, or the keeper of which disobeys any of their lawful orders; and each keeper of any bawdy house, house of ill-fame, or of assignation, and any person interested in keeping the same, or in any rents or profits derived therefrom who shall continue to keep, or tolerate the keeping of any such house after notice served upon him or her by order of said board or either of them, and any such person, or any bawd, courtezan or prostitute who shall disobey any lawful order issued by the board of health , shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and be fined not less than twenty dollars nor more than five hundred dollars.

SEC. 5. Each physician appointed by the board of health, as prescribed by section three of this ordinance, shall, in addition to the examining fee, collect such sum from each keeper of any house of ill-fame, and from each prostitute as may be fixed or prescribed by the board of health jointly with the board of police commissioners; such fees shall be known as hospital dues, and shall be

paid to the clerk of the board of health, who shall hold the same subject to the order of said board.

SEC. 6. The said board of health and board of police commissioners, as well as its agents and physicians shall use all proper means to reclaim any of the prostitutes and lead them to the path of virtue and shall therefore make diligent inquires into the causes leading to prostitution, and shall immediately report any suspicious circumstances to the board and assist any party that desires to abandon her life of shame in all proper ways.

SEC. 7. The said physicians, as well as such other employees as the said board of health or board of police commissioners may appoint to carry out the provisions of this ordinance, shall receive such salary as such board respective may fix.

SEC. 8. The said board of health shall have full power to make all necessary rules, orders and regulations to carry out this ordinance and to enforce the same; and such rules and regulations if entered on record shall be binding upon all parties interested, and any person disobeying or willfully violating the same shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined a sum of not exceeding five hundred dollars.

Sec. 9. All moneys coming into the hands of the board of health by virtue of this ordinance shall be paid into the city treasury at least once in each week, and the clerk of the board of health shall take triplicate receipts therefore, one of which to be deposited with the comptroller and one with the auditor, and

the other to be retained by said board and the amount thereof to be placed to the credit of the board of health.

(Approved July 9, 1870.)

Following is the complete revised Social Evil Ordinance from Chapter 14 of the book listing the revised city ordinances from 1871. The revision was passed June 20, 1871 with a vote of 19 in favor and 2 against. The revision held the same basic requirements as the original ordinance with the main difference being the addition of the authorization for the Social Evil Hospital and House of Industry as well as specific requirements outlining the duties of the Board of Health.

HOUSES OF ILL-FAME

1. Police to make lists of bawds and bawdy houses.
2. Police may suppress bawdy houses – penalty for disobedience of order.
3. Certain bawds to be regarded as brothel-keepers.
4. Salaries of physicians and employees.
5. Prostitutes shall not ply vocation, where.
6. To obtain permission to rent houses, etc.
7. Hospital and house of industry for prostitutes.
8. How supported and maintained.
9. To be under control of Board of Health.
10. Medical examiners.
11. Duties of medical examiners; diseased women, how disposed of.

12. Diseased women not to remain in bawdy-house.
13. Penalty for using ticket other than her own.
14. Penalty for allowing unregistered prostitute in house.
15. Medical examiners to treat diseases, when.
16. Examiners to give notice; penalty for obstructing.
17. Prostitutes not to change residence without permit.
18. Bawdy-house keepers to give information.
19. Not to permit prostitutes to ply vocation without examination card.
20. Board of Health may employ inmates of hospital and house of industry.
21. Names of bawds not to be erased from records, except, etc.
22. Not to leave city without permit.
23. Council to approve location, etc., of hospital and house of industry.

SECTION 1. The Board of Police Commissioners are hereby required to make as full and complete a record of all bawdy houses, houses of ill fame and of assignation, and of all bawds, courtezans and prostitutes within the City of St. Louis, as possible; and to furnish such record to the Board of Health, and from time to time to furnish such additional and supplemental records as shall show fully the facts herein required. This record shall show the names of all persons keeping the same, the ownership of the houses, the locality, the names and aliases, ages and former occupations of the persons and prostitutes living therein, together with such other particulars as may be of statistical or sanitary interest; such record shall be kept in the office of the Clerk of the Board of

Health, but shall be open to inspection only to members of said Board and the Board of Police Commissioners and the members of the City Council.

SEC. 2. The Board of Police Commissioners, upon request of the Board of Health, shall have the power to suppress any house of ill-fame within any locality they may from time to time designate, or the keeper or inmate of which disobeys any of their lawful orders; and each keeper of any bawdy house, house of ill-fame or of assignation, and any person interested in keeping the same, or in any rents or profits derived therefrom, who shall continue to keep or tolerate the keeping of any such house after notice served upon him or her, by order of said Board, or either of them, and any such person or any bawd, courtezan or prostitute, who shall disobey any lawful order issued by the Board of health, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall on conviction, be fined not less than twenty dollars nor more than five hundred dollars.

SEC. 3. Every bawd, courtezan or lewd woman occupying a private room, or rooms, in any tenement house or other building, will be regarded as a brothel-keeper, and required to pay the sum of ten dollars per month for hospital dues, and one dollar per week as examination fee.

SEC. 4. The said physicians, as well as such other employees as the said Board of Health may appoint to carry out the provisions of this ordinance [chapter], shall receive such salary as such Board may fix.

SEC. 5. No prostitute, courtezan or lewd woman shall, within the limits of the City of St. Louis, by word, sign or action, ply their avocation on the streets, or in any public place, or at the door or open windows of the house or rooms

they may occupy; and any prostitute, courtezan or lewd woman violating this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction, shall be fined not less than ten dollars nor more than fifty dollars.

SEC. 6. No prostitute, courtezan or lewd woman shall inhabit or rent any dwelling house or houses, room or rooms, in any tenement house or other building within this city, to be used as a place of prostitution or assignation, without first obtaining permission from the Board of Police Commissioners so to do; and any person violating the provision of this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction, shall be fined not less than twenty nor more than one hundred dollars.

SEC. 7. The Board of Health are hereby authorized to erect, purchase or rent suitable buildings to be used as a Hospital and House of Industry for the exclusive care, medical treatment and industrial employment of diseased bawds and prostitutes; and hereafter it shall not be lawful to admit into the City Hospital any female afflicted with any venereal disease, but such person or persons shall be entitled to medical treatment and attendance as provided by this ordinance [chapter].

SEC. 8. For the future support and maintenance of said Hospital and House of Industry, for the payment of its debts, the advancement of its interest, and the humane and reformatory objects contemplated by its establishment, each owner or keeper of a bawdy house, room or rooms, or assignation house, room or rooms shall pay the sum of ten dollars per month as hospital dues, which sum shall be paid to the Medical Examiners on the first week of each

month, and one dollar each week examination fee; and each prostitute, courtezan or lewd woman shall pay the sum of one dollar and fifty cents each week as hospital dues; which moneys thus coming into the hands of the Board of Health by virtue of this ordinance [chapter], shall be paid into the city treasury at least once in each week, and the Clerk of the Board of Health shall take triplicate receipts therefor, one of which shall be deposited with the Comptroller and on with the Auditor, and the other to be retained by the Board of Health, and the amount thereof shall be placed to the credit of said Hospital and House of Industry; and it shall be the duty of the City Auditor, on the requisition of the Board of Health, to draw his warrant on the City Treasurer, from time to time, for such amount of money as may be necessary for the support of said Hospital, which warrants shall be drawn against and paid out of the money collected under authority of this ordinance [chapter]; and said money shall not be used for any other purpose than for the support and maintenance of said Hospital and House of Industry and for the payment of medical examiners.

SEC. 9. The government and management of said Hospital and House of Industry shall be under the control of the Board of Health, who shall also employ such agents, and make such rules for the government thereof, as may be necessary.

SEC. 10. Each district shall be under the supervision of a regular graduated physician of some medical school in good standing, and shall be appointed by the Board of Health, ad be known and designated as a "Medical Examiner."

SEC. 11. Each Medical Examiner shall visit once in a week, and as much oftener as the Board of Health shall direct, all houses of ill-fame, houses of assignation, and rooms occupied or used by prostitutes, located in his district, and shall there institute such inquiries and make such physical explorations as he may deem necessary to fully satisfy himself in regard to the healthy condition of each inmate or prostitute; and if any such prostitute by him be found to be affected by any venereal disease, as he may order such diseased prostitute, lewd woman, courtezan or inmate of any room or house of ill-fame, or house of assignation, to be removed to the Hospital or House of Industry; and no prostitute shall further ply her avocation after such order until cured and discharged, and the Medical Examiner for each district shall have full power to order the removal or cause the arrest and commitment to the Hospital of any diseased bawd or prostitute until cured or discharged; and any bawd, courtezan, lewd woman, prostitute or inmate of any room, house of ill-fame or assignation house, who shall refuse to enter the Hospital or House of Industry within twelve hours when ordered so to do, or when properly committed by a Medical Examiner, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, on conviction, be fined not less than twenty-five dollars nor more than one hundred dollars for each offence.

SEC. 12. No keeper of a house of prostitution, ill-fame, or assignation house, or room or rooms, shall suffer or permit any female who has been declared by a medical examiner to be afflicted with any venereal diseases and a proper subject for hospital treatment, to remain in her house for a longer period

than twelve hours without notifying the Chief of Police of such facts; and any owner, keeper or person in charge of any house of ill-fame, or assignation house, or room, or rooms, who shall violate the provisions of this section, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction, shall be fined not less than ten dollars nor more than fifty dollars for each offence.

SEC. 13. No prostitute or inmate of a house of ill-fame, or assignation house, or room, or rooms, shall exhibit or have in her possession, for the purpose of plying her vocation, any ticket or examination card issued by the medical examiner other than her own ticket or examination card for the current week, issued in her own name as it appears registered on the record at the Health office; and any prostitute, courtezan or lewd woman violating the provisions of this section, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction, shall be fined not less than twenty dollars nor more than fifty dollars for each offence.

SEC. 14. No owner or keeper, or person in charge of any assignation house or house of ill-fame, shall permit any prostitute or courtezan to remain in their house over twenty-four hours without being duly registered or having a permit to change residence, without reporting such prostitute or inmate to the Chief of Police; and any keeper, owner or person in charge of any house, room, or rooms of ill-fame, who shall violate the provision of this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction, shall be fined not less than ten dollars nor more than twenty dollars for each offence.

SEC. 15. It shall be the duty of each Medical Examiner to treat all cases of venereal disease found to exist in the prostitutes living in his district, when solicited to do so, and when not properly requiring hospital treatment; but he shall not, under any circumstances, receive any pay or emoluments for rendering such service, expect his regular monthly salary. He shall not, under any circumstances, employ a substitute or delegate any of the powers vested in him by this ordinance [chapter], or of the ordinance of which this is amendatory. Each Medical Examiner shall make a full and detailed report in writing once in each week to the Board of Health of his action in each case, and the condition of the persons under his charge, and of the houses or rooms occupied by them.

SEC. 16. Each Medical Examiner shall give at least three days' verbal notice to the owner or keeper of the house, or room or rooms, of the day at which he will be present to receive the weekly and monthly dues herein provided for, and to grant certificates of examination; and any owner, keeper or person in charge of any house or room or rooms of ill-fame, obstructing, hindering or preventing a Medical Examiner from discharging the duties of his office shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and fined not less than twenty dollars for each offence.

SEC. 17. No prostitute, courtezan or lewd woman shall leave their place of abode, and move to another place or house of ill-fame to live, within the City of St. Louis, until such person shall have first obtained a permit to do so from the Chief of Police, and no permit to change residence shall be granted unless the applicant first produce her examination card for the current week in which she

asks permission to change residence; and unless her card show her to be in good health, no permit to change residence shall be granted.

SEC. 18. Each owner, keeper or person in charge, or inmate of any house of ill-fame, assignation house, bawdy house, room or rooms used for the purpose of prostitution, or by prostitutes, shall be and are hereby required to give full and complete information to the Board of Police Commissioners, and its proper agents, respecting all matters provided in section one of this ordinance [chapter], and also of any change that may take place in its ownership, charge or control in respect to any of its inmates; and such owner, keeper or person in charge, or inmates of any room or rooms, or house of ill-fame or assignation, refusing when requested or required to furnish the information required in section one of this ordinance [chapter], will be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and , on conviction, shall be fined not less than twenty dollars nor more than fifty dollars for each offence.

SEC. 19. Any owner or keeper of a bawdy house, house of ill-fame or assignation house, who shall employ or permit any registered female or females, without an examination card from a duly authorized Medical Examiner for the current week, to ply her vocation at her house, room or place of abode, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction, shall be fined not less than twenty-five dollars for each offence.

SEC. 20. The Board of Health shall have full authority to employ all inmates committed to the Hospital and House of Industry at such needlework or domestic labor as they may be able to perform, and the amount received for

such work shall be collected and paid in to the city treasury, and placed to the credit of the Hospital and House of Industry, and any prostitute desiring to reform may remain an inmate of the House of Industry for a sufficient length of time to enable her to procure employment, and for this purpose all proper aid and assistance shall be afforded by the Board of Health and its agents.

SECT. 21. No name of any registered bawd, courtezan or lewd woman shall be erased from the records, except by order of the Board of Health, and Board of Police Commissioners.

SEC. 22. No bawd, courtezan or lewd woman shall leave this city without signifying her intention so to do to the Chief of Police, and the Chief of Police shall in all cases grant a permit, except when the party applying may be charged with or suspected of being guilty of some criminal offence or misdemeanor.

SEC. 23. No house or place shall be rented, leased, bought or contracted by the Board of Health for the purpose of using the same as a Hospital or House of Industry, as provided in this ordinance [chapter], without the approval and consent of the City Council. Nothing in the section shall be applied to the building now used for that purpose.

(Approved July 10, 1871.)

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